

8-1-2007

Youth Involvement in Community Development: Implications and Possibilities for Extension

MA Brennan

University of Florida, brennanm@ifas.ufl.edu

Rosemary V. Barnett

University of Florida, rbarnet@ufl.edu

Eboni Baugh

University of Florida, ejbaugh@ufl.edu



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Recommended Citation

Brennan, M., Barnett, R. V., & Baugh, E. (2007). Youth Involvement in Community Development: Implications and Possibilities for Extension. *The Journal of Extension*, 45(4), Article 5. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol45/iss4/5>

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Extension by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.



August 2007 // Volume 45 // Number 4 // Feature Articles // 4FEA3



PREVIOUS
ARTICLE



ISSUE
CONTENTS



NEXT
ARTICLE



Youth Involvement in Community Development: Implications and Possibilities for Extension

Abstract

There is a need for Extension program/policy developers to better understand the role of youth in the community development process. While often seen as suited only for 4-H programs, youth can significantly contribute to a variety of Extension activities. Through active engagement, youth can take on ownership and become lifelong contributors to local well-being. This mixed-methods research reflects data from a survey of 418 Florida youth and 12 in-depth key informant interviews. The findings provide insights into the factors most directly shaping youth attitudes and involvement in their communities. From these, implications for applied use in Extension programs are presented.

M. A. Brennan

Assistant Professor, Community Development
brennanm@ifas.ufl.edu

Rosemary V. Barnett

Assistant Professor, Youth Development
rbarnet@ufl.edu

Eboni Baugh

Assistant Professor, Family Life
ejbaugh@ufl.edu

Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences
The University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida

Introduction

There is a need for Extension agents, program developers, and policy planners to better understand the role of youth in the community development process. Equally important, a need exists to better recognize the benefits and opportunities presented through youth involvement in community development activities. Extension plays a vital role in engaging youth through interactions with the local community, particularly in the implementation of 4-H programs. While often seen only as suited for 4-H, youth can actively contribute to a variety of Extension activities that enhance local life. If youth are included in programs to meet needs and empower communities, they can become lifelong participants and take on a sense of ownership in development efforts.

The merging of community building and youth development has been at the core of recent youth engagement literature (Nitzberg, 2005; Kubisch, 2005; Cahn & Gray, 2005; Lynn, 2005; Brennan, Barnett, & Lesmeister, 2006). It has identified that youth must be fully engaged and involved in change efforts at the community level if they are to learn to function as effective members of society (Nitzberg, 2005). Community building, for individuals, focuses on building the capacity and empowerment to identify opportunities for change within or outside of the community.

An understanding of youth motivations and efficacy to this kind of engagement are important so that Extension and other development professionals can maximize these valuable resources. As youth are brought into community organizations and civic roles that they have traditionally been excluded from, they can participate in local decision-making at multiple levels. This collaboration leads to skill enhancement, confidence building, and ownership that prepare them as they

navigate toward adulthood. To facilitate an understanding of youth involvement, we focus on the primary research question: Can we identify and measure factors associated with youth involvement in their communities?

The study reported here examined key independent variables previously found to affect youth involvement, including demographics, influences (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Lamborn, Brown, Mounts & Steinberg, 1992; Youniss & Yates, 1997; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Flanagan & Van Horn, 2001; Chan & Elder, 1999; Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Parke & Ladd, 1992), motivations (Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, & Zukin, 2002; Clary Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Flanagan & Van Horn, 2001; Wilkinson, 1991) obstacles (Independent Sector, 2001; Felix, 2001; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Israel, Coleman, & Ilvento, 1993), and efficacy (Camino, 2000; Fogel, 2004; Jarret, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005). All variables were entered into the full model, to assess the partial effects of each conceptual area of youth community involvement. Finally, a reduced stepwise model, including only those variables found to be statistically significant identifies those variables that play a key role in shaping involvement. Specific predictors were identified in order to help youth professionals know what resources to tap as they work to increase youth efforts and more clearly define roles for youth in local development efforts.

Related Research

The development of community is a dynamic process involving all segments of the locality, including the often-overlooked youth population. The key component to this process is found in the creation and maintenance of channels of interaction and communication among diverse local groups that are otherwise directed toward their more individual interests. By facilitating interaction and developing relationships, these diverse individuals interact and begin to mutually understand common needs. When relationships, consistent interaction, and channels of communication can be established and maintained, increases in local adaptive capacities materialize and community can emerge.

During the process of residents and groups interacting, the capacity for local action emerges (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). This capacity is often referred to as "community agency." Agency is therefore reflected in the capacity of people to manage, utilize, and enhance those resources available to them in addressing local issues (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Brennan, 2005). Community exists in the collective actions of its members. These collective actions allow residents of all ages and backgrounds to participate in the creation, articulation, and implementation of efforts to support local change. Through this process of interaction, the collection of individuals creates an entity whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

While much of the attention given to building local capacities is often focused toward adults, youth are an increasingly visible and active component in community development efforts. Such involvement contributes to both the development of community and the social and psychological development of the youth involved. To encourage youth involvement in the community, it is vital to understand the influences, motivations, obstacles, and feedback that they receive from the community.

Factors Influencing Youth Involvement in the Community

Youth typically spend a substantial amount of time in activities extracurricular to school, including involvement in community-based organizations, school and local sports teams, and school-based clubs. All of these, and the interaction with individuals within them, directly influence youth involvement in their communities.

Previous research supports the premise that participation in community activities is associated with behavioral well-being among adolescents. Influences on youth becoming involved, such as increasing academic performance during high school, increasing the likelihood of college attendance (Eccles & Barber, 1999), greater school engagement (Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1992), and reinforcing positive social values or setting an example (Youniss & Yates, 1997), have been found to affect involvement.

Other factors have been reported by youth as influencing their need for and willingness to be a part of a greater good through involvement. These include: feelings of efficacy (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002), the need to be valued and taken seriously by others in the community (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2001), increasing their own self-esteem, and having a responsibility toward society by performing a public duty (Independent Sector, 2001). Recognition by the community at large is part of feeling valued (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Finally, other factors, such as parental involvement, can facilitate influences on youth involvement. Youth whose parents are actively involved in the community are more likely to become active themselves (Chan & Elder, 1999). Youth whose parents do not participate in civic activities may still become active in their communities; however, a supportive and reinforcing parental relationship may have a greater contribution to civic engagement than parental modeling (Fletcher & Van Horn, 2000). Perhaps as a result of an increased awareness of the advantages for adolescents, parents play an important role in linking their children to the world around them

(Parke & Ladd, 1992).

Motivations for Youth Involvement

Youth and adults have identified a variety of motivators for volunteering or becoming active in their communities. These have included practical assessments of their activities, such as: to meet school requirements; hopes of getting higher grades in a particular class; improving their chances of getting into college; or as an entry to a desired job (Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, & Zukin, 2002). Motivations can also be the result of more practical conditions, such as a need to develop job contacts and enhance existing skills. In geographic areas where employment opportunities are limited, voluntary activities can offer a valuable alternative to paid employment (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; Independent Sector, 2001).

Youth also report becoming active for self-actualization (recognition, raise self-esteem) and social responsibility (setting an example, public duty) (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; Independent Sector, 2001). Feelings of efficacy (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002), having responsibility/leadership (Kubisch, 2005), and the need to be taken seriously (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2001) have all emerged as important reasons why youth pursue community involvement.

Finally, activeness in the community is facilitated by youth participation in community-based groups. Interaction between social groups promotes awareness of needs and helps identify volunteer opportunities (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Overall, a variety of motivations are present that shape civic behavior. Included are traditional factors (motivations and sociodemographics), but also the extent to which people interact with each other.

Obstacles to Successful Youth Involvement

Despite the influences and motivations, significant obstacles exist that inhibit, and often discourage, community activeness among youth. Among the leading obstacles prevalent in the research, not being taken seriously, not being asked, and not being assigned or having an identifiable role are consistently noted in the research literature (Independent Sector, 2001). Felix (2003) identified other challenges to youth involvement in communities, including a lack of communication and awareness of opportunities, turf issues among organizations competing for youth participants, youth fears of speaking out, lack of diversity, and adultism or the systematic mistreatment of young people simply because of their age.

Other factors such as lack of transportation (Scales & Leffert, 1999), lack of time (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002), and not being sure of the benefits of their contributions (Israel, Coleman, & Ilvento, 1993) can limit the active involvement of youth. Scales & Leffert (1999) identified four key barriers that keep youth from participating in activities: lack of interesting programs, transportation problems, lack of knowledge about programs, and cost. Similarly, community organizations may be uncertain of the role or impact that youth may have in their efforts (Israel, Coleman, & Ilvento, 1993). Viewing young people as transient, participating in too many other activities, and having less predictable schedules, community organizations may exclude youth. Last, the extent to which youth can contribute to the decision making process of organizations and play an active role in program/policy development is important in shaping youth involvement.

Efficacy and Youth Involvement

The views and opinions of others, namely authority figures, can greatly influence youth community involvement. Youth report a greater likelihood of becoming involved if their participation is valued by parents, teachers, community leaders, etc. (Camino, 2000; Fogel, 2004; Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005). The receptivity of authority figures can play a central role in youth efficacy, their engagement, and their continued involvement in the community.

Historically, previously held negative beliefs by both youth and adults (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Zeldin, 2004) have created a disconnection between youth involvement and youth-adult partnerships in the community. Often, youth have not been viewed as essential contributors to society, mainly due to stereotypical images and misconceptions of their age and developmental capacity. The period of intense emotional changes during adolescence helps contribute to the lower expectations of youth from adults and subsequent decreased opportunity for youth to participate in community activities (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Such conditions have led to a lack of recognition and receptivity by adults, and often, the wider community.

The increasing presence of youth in the development process and the establishment of youth-adult partnerships have created an environment where communities are more receptive. The active involvement of youth highlights their value and provides an opportunity to erase negative stereotypes. Recent research has focused on such positively held adult notions of youth and their relationship to encouraging youth involvement. Zeldin (2002) reported that many adults perceive adolescents as being capable of contributing to their communities, performing well in community positions, and taking proactive approaches to their life development. This receptiveness opens the door to long-term youth involvement, while also facilitating greater appreciation for the youth contribution to the community by adults (Camino, 2000).

These factors all result in influences, motivations, obstacles, and feedback that directly or indirectly influence youth toward or away from local involvement. These variables are examined further in the study reported here to determine whether any predict involvement, so that Extension professionals may consider and recognize key factors in order to engage youth in local interactions, particularly in the implementation of 4-H programs.

Methods

The research was designed to measure the factors contributing to youth involvement in their communities. To accomplish these goals, multiple research sites (surveying numerous community development focused 4-H groups throughout the state) and multiple research methods (quantitative survey data, secondary data, and key informant interviews) were used. Each protocol was designed to help determine specific motivations for youth involvement and to identify methods for better including youth in the community development process.

Initial data collection took the form of key informant interviews with youth, 4-H program development agents, and adults actively involved with youth/adult partnerships. Key informants are individuals who, as a result of their knowledge, experience, or social status, can provide insights and access to information valuable in understanding issues, impacts, and needs (Krannich & Humphrey, 1986; Schwartz, Bridger & Hyman, 2001).

In June 2005, 12 key informant interviews were conducted. These included 4-H administrators, educators, youth participants, and program administrators that include youth in their efforts. A wide range of expertise and program interests was included to help enhance reliability and validity. This research stage was designed to aid in the identification of specific issues and motivations for youth community involvement. Interviews facilitated our understanding of the context of attitudes and actions, as well provided information that would not have been evident from survey or secondary data. They were particularly helpful in the development of questions for use in the survey.

Subsequent to the key informant interviews, quantitative data was obtained from Florida teen 4-H participants through a self-administered questionnaire. A modified Total Design Method (TDM) was used in these surveys (Dillman, 2000). This method stressed a precise methodology, including specialized design and personalization. Questionnaires were distributed in group settings to all participants to help ensure a high completion rate. Based on previous research and literature, a series of concepts and variables were identified. The researchers then developed a questionnaire including these items. Reliability and validity were assessed through pilot testing and through review by an expert panel of reviewers. Indices and other data points were tested statistically to assess their reliability.

Data collection took place at four different 4-H events between June and September 2005. Included were the Florida 4-H Legislature, State 4-H Congress, and two "Learning and Leading" workshops. A total 679 youth ages 12-18 took part in these events. Sample validation showed that participants in these events, while not representative of all youth in Florida, were statistically representative of the overall 4-H teen population in Florida (Isaac & Michael, 1997). Completed and usable questionnaires were obtained from 418 respondents, representing a response rate of 62%. This response rate and the number of usable questionnaires returned were more than sufficient to statistically represent 4-H Youth in Florida (Isaac & Michael, 1997).

Analysis

A series of multiple regression models were estimated to assess the partial effects of each conceptual area on youth community involvement (Table 1). These models focus on each area individually. A final model considered all independent variables together, and was ultimately reduced, in order to obtain the most parsimonious model.

Youth involvement in their communities was measured with a series of questions that asked respondents about their frequency and level of involvement (see Appendix for a listing of items included in this index). According to the community development literature, a variety of factors influence community agency and shape the context in which it emerges. Among those included in this analysis are sociodemographic characteristics, influences for involvement, motivations for activeness in their communities, obstacles to community involvement, and youth efficacy. A full description and measurement of the summative scale variables (activeness, motivations, and efficacy) are provided in the Appendix.

Table 1.
Comparison of Multivariate Models on Youth Involvement

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Reduced Overall
--Standardized Regression Coefficients--							
Demographic Variables							
Gender	-.070					-.001	

(males=1)							
Age	.248***					.167**	.217***
Length of residence	.085					.055	
Household size	.054					.035	
Urban/Rural location	-.101*					-.064	
Household income	.134**					.094*	
Influences							
Receiving a money reward		-.057				.004	
Receiving recognition		-.093				-.076	
Opportunity to use my skills		.119				.084	
To get acquainted		-.006				-.060	
Opportunity for new skills		.074				.047	
Being asked by friends		.043				.038	
To influencing others		.074				.044	
To set an example for others		.227**				.067	.126**
Being asked by local leaders		-.035				-.043	
Motivations Index			.375***			.154***	.171***
Obstacles							
Not being taken seriously				.093		-.003	
Not being asked to participate				-.014		-.017	
No identified role for youth				-.120		-.074	
No assignment to committees				-.030		.025	
Youth not allowed to vote				-.192***		-.081	-.102*
Friends disapproving				.054		.031	
Not having skills to offer				.064		.018	
Feeling intimidated				-.158**		.066	
Not having transportation				.035		-.017	
Not having				-.100		-.028	

time to commit							
Not being sure of the benefit				-.080		.019	
Not being recognized				-.098		-.058	-.125**
Efficacy Index					.487***	.304***	.329***
R2 Adjusted	.11	.16	.14	.10	.24	.34	.35
F value	7.87***	9.04***	65.82***	4.36***	122.68***	7.09***	32.30***
Cases	349	391	403	376	396	344	344
* significant at the .05 level ** significant at the .01 level *** significant at the .001 level							

Individually, all conceptual areas played a role in shaping community involvement. Efficacy and involvement influences were the strongest predictors of community involvement ($R^2=.24$ and $.16$ respectively). Motivations were strongly related as well ($R^2=.14$). Among the sociodemographics that were positive and significantly related were age and household income. Rural/urban location was also significant, with rural youth being more involved. These items accounted for 11% of the variation in the model ($R^2=.11$). Last, obstacles and influences variables played a role ($R^2=.10$ and $R^2=.16$ respectively).

All variables were entered into the full model (Model 6). Four were statistically significant, and the model accounted for 34% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2=.34$). A more parsimonious reduced stepwise model was developed consisting of only the significant variables (Reduced Model). This model showed six significant variables and accounted for 35% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2=.35$)-- age, the influence of involvement to set an example to others, the motivations index, the obstacle of youth not being allowed voting privileges (negatively related), the obstacle of a lack of recognition (negatively related), and the efficacy index.

Implications and Conclusion

The study reported here was based on the premise that youth, acting as central parts of the community development process, have the capacity to improve local well-being. It reflects input from 12 key informants and 418 active youth who participated in a survey conducted on their activeness and the factors shaping their involvement. The findings of this study provide direct implications for Extension professionals to use in shaping programs and policies to both capitalize on the vast resources that youth present, as well as to more clearly define an established role for youth in local development efforts. Taken together, the findings of this research present a clear insight into efforts that Extension can use to foster effective youth involvement in community development.

- The sociodemographic variables, particularly the relationship of older youth being more active, provide opportunities for community involvement. This may reflect that older youth are more in need of community service credit, skill attainment, and experience. Implications of this finding can include the development of efforts to encourage older youth to become/remain active. Alternately, this finding indicates that younger adolescents might be an untapped audience from which volunteers and future community activists could be recruited. Specialized efforts to reach younger audiences would be useful in this context.
- Influences were also important, but particularly the influence of setting an example for others. To capitalize on this finding, Extension and community development professionals could focus more on building the kinds of opportunities that would allow youth to set an example for other youth. This may result in increased youth involvement, leading to positive effects on other domains of youth and community development (Scales & Leffert, 1999). By promoting example setting, for instance, youth take on leadership roles with other youth, thereby enhancing their social and civic development.
- Motivations for community involvement are also important. Future efforts could stress to youth that their involvement will make a difference in changing the local conditions they are not pleased with. Specifically, it could be stressed that they can fill the void in meeting the need for new ideas and services.
- Two significant obstacles to community involvement were also identified, which present direct implications for applied program and policy development. Youth not being allowed to vote

was negatively related to community involvement. Uses of this finding in program/policy development could take a variety of forms. If youth were provided with voting privileges, they would be more likely to be active participants in community development efforts. Such ability sends the message that they are welcome in the decision-making process, that their opinions are valuable, that they are capable of good decision making, and that they have the knowledge and understanding of issues to significantly contribute to debates. Providing voting power to youth also is likely to foster a sense of ownership and contribute to youth being long-term players in community development efforts.

- The obstacle of youth lacking recognition was also negatively related to community involvement. To overcome this obstacle, active and routine efforts could be made to promote and recognize the contributions of youth. Included would be marketing, promotions, media coverage, and other public recognitions. Also more formal activities such as awards, official acknowledgement, and commemoration events (banquets, award dinners) would further promote youth contributions. All of these would clearly recognize the role of youth in community activities. These actions would send the message that youth participation is important and valued, as well as an activity that is recognized as valuable by the community.
- Finally, efficacy was directly related to involvement. Youth were more active when their community was receptive to their contributions and viewed them as worthwhile to the community. Similar to the suggestions for recognition presented above, applied efforts could take the form of public acknowledgement of youth contributions, formal announcements by local leaders that youth are making important differences, and formal invitations for youth of all ages to become involved in a variety of community building efforts. Any actions that could be taken would send the message that the community is responsive and aware of youth contributions would further help encourage youth involvement.

Civically active youth present a remarkable opportunity for advancing Extension programs and significantly contributing to the development of new programs and policies. Further, active youth present the opportunity for long-term involvement and ownership of community and Extension programs. Building on this opportunity, active youth can be a cornerstone of Extension efforts designed to improving local well-being.

References

- Andolina, M. W., Jenkins, K., Keeter, S., & Zukin, C. (2002). Searching for the meaning of youth civic engagement: Notes from the field. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(4), 189-195.
- Brennan, M. A. (2005). Volunteerism and community development: A comparison of factors shaping volunteer behavior in Ireland and America. *Journal of Volunteer Administration, 23*(2), 20-28.
- Brennan, M.A., Barnett, R., & Lesmeister, M. (2006). Enhancing leadership, local capacity, and youth involvement in the community development process: findings from a survey of Florida youth. *Journal of the Community Development Society*, (forthcoming).
- Cahn, E. S., & Gray, C. (2005). Using the coproduction principle: no more throwaway kids. Putting Youth at the Center of Community Building. *New Directions for Youth Development, 106*: Summer 2005.
- Camino, L. A. (2000). Youth-adult partnerships: Entering new territory in community work and research. *Applied Developmental Science, 4*, 11-21.
- Camino, L. A., & Zeldin, S. (2002). From periphery to center: Pathways for youth civic engagement in the day-to-day life of communities. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*, 213-220.
- Chan, C. G., & Elder, G. H., Jr. (1999). Family influences on civic involvement. Unpublished manuscript cited in Fletcher et al, 2000.
- Clary, E., Snyder, M., & Ridge, R. (1992). Volunteers' motivations: A functional strategy for the recruitment, placement, and retention of volunteers. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 2*(4), 333-350.
- Dillman, D. (2000). *Mail and Internet surveys*. Wiley and Sons: New York, NY.
- Eccles, J. S., & Barber, B. (1999). Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band: What kind of extracurricular involvement matters? *Journal of Adolescent Research, 14*, 10-34.
- Felix, A. (October 2003.) Making youth voice a community principle. *Youth Service Journal*. Youth Serve America: Washington, DC.
- Flanagan, C., & Van Horn, B. (2001). *Youth civic engagement: Membership and mattering in local communities*. Focus. Davis: 4-H Center for Youth Development, University of California.
- Fletcher, A. C., Elder, G. H., & Mekos, D. (2000). Parental influences on adolescent involvement in community activities. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 1*, 29-48.

Fogel, S. J. (2004). Risks and opportunities for success: Perceptions of urban youths in a distressed community and lessons for adults. *Families in Society, 3*, 335-344.

Independent Sector. (2001). *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector.

Isaac, S., & Michael, W. (1997). *Handbook in Research and Evaluation*. San Diego, CA: EdITS Publishers.

Israel, G. D., Coleman, D. L., Ilvento, T. W. (1993). Student involvement in community needs assessment. *Journal of Community Development Society, 24*(2), 249-271.

Jarrett, R. L., Sullivan, P. J., & Watkins, N. D. (2005). Developing social capital through participation in organized youth programs: Qualitative insights from three programs. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 41-55.

Krannich, R., & Humphrey, C. (1986). Using key informant data in comparative community research: An empirical assessment. *Sociological Methods and Research 14*, 473-493.

Kubisch, A. C. (2005). Comprehensive community building initiatives--ten years later: What we have learned about the principles guiding the work. Putting youth at the center of community building. *New Directions for Youth Development*. No.106: Summer 2005.

Lamborn, S. D., Brown, B. B., Mounts, N. S., & Steinberg, L. (1992). Putting school in perspective: The influence of family, peers, extracurricular participation, and part-time work on academic engagement. In F.M. Newman (Ed.), *Student engagement and achievement in American secondary schools* (pp. 153-191). New York: Teachers College Press.

Luloff, A. E., & Bridger, J. (2003). Community agency and local development. In D. Brown & L. Swanson (Eds.), *Challenges for rural America in the twenty-first century*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Luloff, A. E., & Swanson, L. (1995). Community agency and disaffection: Enhancing collective resources. In L. Beaulieu and D. Mulkey (Eds.) *Investing in people: The human capital needs of rural America*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Lynn, A. (2005). Youth using research: Learning through social practice, community building, and social change. Putting youth at the center of community building. *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 106: Summer 2005.

Nitzberg, J. (2005). The meshing of youth development and community building. Putting youth at the center of community building. *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 106: Summer 2005.

Parke, R. D., & Ladd, G. W. (1992). *Family-peer relationships: Modes of linkage*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Scales, P. C., & Leffert, N. (1999). *Developmental assets*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

Schwartz, M., Bridger, J., & Hyman, D. (2001). A validity assessment of aggregation methods for multiple key informant survey data. *Journal of the Community Development Society, 32*(2), 226-237.

Sherrod, L. R., Flanagan, C., & Youniss, J. (2002). Dimensions of citizenship and opportunities for youth development: The what, why, when, where and who of citizenship development. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(4), 264-272.

Wilkinson, K. (1991). *The Community in rural America*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1997). What we know about engendering civic identity. *American Behavioral Scientist, 40*, 620-631.

Zeldin, S. (2002). Sense of community and positive adult beliefs toward adolescents and youth policy in urban neighborhoods and small cities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 31*(5), 331-343.

Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance. *Applied Developmental Science, 8*, 75-90.

Appendix

Measures and Statistics for Scale Variables

Youth involvement (dependent variable) measures included the following items: (1) the number of clubs, groups, and/or organizations to which the respondent belonged (number of clubs/organizations); (2) hours per month spent on organized activities with other members of this community (number of hours); (3) a self-ranking description of the respondent's level of involvement in local activities, events, or organizations (1 — not at all active to 4 — very active); (4) membership on a community board (no/yes); (5) membership on a community council (no/yes);

and (6) membership on a community committee (no/yes). These variables were combined into a composite score that served as a single dependent variable. The data were factor analyzed using several models/rotations. In all analyses, only one factor was identified. Cronbach's Alpha for this index was .79.

Motivation variables included: I believe that the community needs new ideas, I believe that the community needs better services, I am dissatisfied with the way things are, I enjoy local politics, I believe that others will eventually return the favor for my efforts, The community needs volunteers to reduce costs, I need community service for school/scholarships, and I feel it is my public duty as a citizen. Response options ranged from 1 — no influence to 5 — strong influence. In all factor analyses, a one factors model was identified. Cronbach's Alpha for this index was .68.

Efficacy: Consider the group/organization that you are most involved in. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I'm actively involved in decision making, I'm actively involved in policy making, My community values youth in working toward solutions, Youth play a useful role in the community, I am not taken seriously when making decisions, I have a large say in how the organization grows, My input has value, and I influence the community by being in this organization. Response options ranged from 1 — strongly disagree to 5 — strong agree. In all factor analyses, a one factors model was identified. Cronbach's Alpha for this index was .84.

Demographic variables were measured as follows: Gender (Female=0, Male=1), Age (age in years), Length of residence (in years), Household size (number of people in household), rural/urban location (1 — farm to 6 — large city), and household income level (1- lower income to 3 — higher income).

Copyright © by Extension Journal, Inc. ISSN 1077-5315. Articles appearing in the Journal become the property of the Journal. Single copies of articles may be reproduced in electronic or print form for use in educational or training activities. Inclusion of articles in other publications, electronic sources, or systematic large-scale distribution may be done only with prior electronic or written permission of the [Journal Editorial Office, joe-ed@joe.org](mailto:joe-ed@joe.org).

If you have difficulties viewing or printing this page, please contact [JOE Technical Support](#)