Afterschool Matters

How Is the Afterschool Field Defining Program Quality?
Kristi L. Palmer, Stephen A. Anderson, and Ronald M. Sabatelli

Does Your Organization Welcome Participants with Disabilities?
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Welcome

This issue of *Afterschool Matters* offers us some helpful direction to understanding persistent questions in our field—such as "What do high quality out-of-school-time programs actually *do* to yield good outcomes?"—while also challenging us to consider the nuance of language and how we talk about our profession. There is also a wonderful blending of authors in this volume representing the fields of sociology, public health, human development and family studies, and education.

Having recently returned from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Summer Institute, I am struck by the vastness of the experience and passion in our field for working with and supporting the healthy development of children and youth. Yet there are many corners of the field we are continuing to explore and better understand, so as to make the most informed decisions on program improvement, utilization of resources, and assessment strategies.

In "How Is the Afterschool Field Defining Program Quality," Palmer, Anderson, and Sabatelli review empirical evidence regarding the characteristics of effective programs and the field's emerging consensus regarding program quality. We recognize that not all programs can yield positive outcomes—so it is imperative to understand more about those that do. Galloway and Shea, in "Does Your Organization Welcome Participants with Disabilities?" push us to consider how we are supporting and serving children with special needs in afterschool programs. Adapting an existing research instrument, they examine the extent to which programs truly welcome children and youth with disabilities. In our third article, Nelson provides insight into Latina/o youth experience in afterschool programs and subsequent impact on college pathways. While it is a small exploratory study, "The Differential Role of Youth Development Program Participation for Latina/o Adolescents" offers some unique methodological choices and rich qualitative analysis.

Our last article comes via our colleagues at the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) at the University of Pennsylvania. In "Defining Our Terms: Professional Development in Out-of-School Time" Peter draws attention to our lack of clear terminology and communication in the field around the topic of professional development. We hope that this article can be a springboard to a national conversation and the sharpening of our professional dialogue.

NIOST is very cognizant of the need to also engage youth voice and words. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview one of the teen girls participating in the Row New York youth development program, which is captured in the final piece of this journal. Her comments marvelously illuminate how enjoyable facilitated out-of-school time experiences can be, while also supporting development of valuable assets such as time management, motivation, and teamwork. I encourage you to visit Flushing Meadow Park and take a look in Meadow Lake, and you will see some enriching out-of-school time experiences for older youth in action.

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how is the afterschool field defining program quality?

A Review of Effective Program Practices and Definitions of Program Quality

by Kristi L. Palmer, Stephen A. Anderson, and Ronald M. Sabatelli

Quality has become a primary focus in the afterschool field—and with good reason. Not only does the focus on quality convey a broad commitment to doing good work in our afterschool programming, but it also requires the afterschool field to make informed choices about *what actually occurs* in afterschool programs.

While research on program effectiveness offers ample evidence that afterschool programs can benefit young people in a variety of ways, this same body of research demonstrates that not all programs are equally effective (Granger, 2008). Some programs show positive results in many or all major outcome categories. Other programs are associated with positive results for some but not all outcomes; still others show no positive outcomes at all. This variability in effectiveness highlights the need for a better understanding of *how* successful afterschool programs actually work, while keeping in mind the ever-present question of how to define success.

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The focus on quality comes at a pivotal time for the afterschool field, as prominent voices debate the usefulness of allowing particular outcomes to guide programming. Robert Halpern (2006) has called attention to the problems associated with programming that is solely outcome-driven. He argues that the afterschool field has tended to focus on a narrow set of outcomes, usually academic, without fully exploring the range and complexity of relevant developmental tasks. Halpern goes on to suggest that we reformulate our expectations of afterschool programs to take into account the range of purposes they serve.

Focusing on afterschool program quality provides the opportunity for just such a reformulation. This article will show how the vibrant discussions of afterschool program quality, which encompass both theory and empirical research, increasingly offer policymakers, funders, evaluators, and program providers a sound basis for making decisions about afterschool programming.

The efforts of the afterschool field to define program quality are generating an increasingly robust literature that highlights the value of broadening our focus beyond outcome-driven approaches to include quality-driven approaches. Quality-driven approaches focus on day-to-day program processes as they relate both to holistic program goals and to individual outcomes. Because program quality formulations are increasingly informed by both theory and empirical evidence from evaluation research, a quality-driven approach remains empirically based but is liberated from an exclusive focus on outcomes. As a point of convergence between theory and results-based or outcome-only approaches, the field's emerging focus on program quality offers a new and compelling guide for efforts to manage and improve afterschool programming.

This review article examines formulations of afterschool program quality emerging from outcome research, expert and professional consensus, and "process" research on how successful afterschool programs operate. After briefly summarizing current literature on the effectiveness of afterschool programs, we review empirical evidence regarding the characteristics of effective programs, that is, what effective afterschool programs do to produce positive outcomes. Next, we

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provide an overview of how program quality has been conceptualized by afterschool researchers. We conclude by discussing the field's emerging consensus regarding quality afterschool programming, highlighting key considerations as the afterschool field undertakes efforts to achieve both program quality and positive outcomes for youth.

Program Effectiveness: Do Afterschool Programs Make a Difference?

Not surprisingly, research on afterschool program effectiveness has traditionally focused on outcomes. Studies of afterschool program effectiveness document a variety of benefits associated with program participation.

Results of the many evaluations of afterschool programs have been summarized in several recently published qualitative reviews (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008). The field has also seen the publication of several quantitative reviews (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Lauer et al., 2006; Zief & Lauver, 2006) that use the technique of meta-analysis to identify trends in the results of afterschool program evaluations.

Considered collectively, the qualitative and quantitative reviews of effectiveness research provide a sense of the outcomes afterschool programs are generally expected to achieve. These reviews also document significant variability in programs' ability to achieve these outcomes. Not all afterschool programs are equally effective in producing positive youth outcomes. Thus, one way to define program quality is to look at the factors identified in the evaluation research as characterizing effective programs, defining these as programs that produced positive youth outcomes. To the extent that reviews of effectiveness research capture variability in program practices related to positive youth outcomes, these reviews collectively contribute to the field's efforts to define program quality.

Qualitative Reviews
Little and colleagues (2008), of the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP), reviewed afterschool evaluation literature and found evidence that programs can have beneficial effects on academic performance and social and emotional development, as well as preventing

problem behaviors and promoting health and wellness. Despite this list of potential benefits associated with participation in afterschool programs, Little and colleagues concluded that the available research indicated that not all programs produce these outcomes. They associate programs' varying levels of success with differences in participants' access to and sustained participation in programs and with the degree to which programs partner with families, schools, and other community contacts. They also associate the variability in outcome with specific program factors they consider to be issues of program quality. Such factors include the level of supervision and structure the program provides, the quality of staff training, and the degree to which program activities are carefully matched with the program's specific goals and objectives.

Bodilly and Beckett (2005) found that effective afterschool programs achieved positive outcomes in four categories: provision of school-age childcare, academic attitudes and achievement, social and health behaviors, and social interactions. Bodilly and Beckett focused their review on only the most methodologically rigorous evaluations. Using these stringent criteria, they found that afterschool programs were associated with only modest benefits. Bodilly and Beckett make a compelling case for the importance of taking into account factors such as who participates in the afterschool program (age and other personal characteristics), length of time in the program, frequency of attendance, program content (specific activities, teaching strategies), and level of methodological rigor in the evaluation plan. Once again, these dimensions of variability are precisely the sort of factors that constitute program quality.

Meta-analytic reviews indicated mixed results when it comes to afterschool program effectiveness.

Quantitative Reviews

To date, there are three published meta-analyses of afterschool program evaluations (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Lauer et al., 2006; Zief & Lauver, 2006). Meta-analysis is a quantitative analysis strategy that enables researchers to pool the results of many different studies by establishing a common metric. Consistent with the qualitative reviews discussed above, the meta-analytic reviews indicated mixed results when it comes to afterschool program effectiveness.

The meta-analysis performed by Zief and Lauver (2006) yielded no evidence that afterschool programs were effective. Among the categories of outcomes they examined were youth behavioral changes, social and emotional development, and academic performance. Zief and Lauver used very strict inclusion criteria, looking only at studies that included the strongest research designs. They therefore included just five studies in their meta-analysis. Including so few evaluation studies may have limited the reliability of their findings. Despite finding that afterschool programs did not significantly affect outcomes, Zief and Lauver emphasize the importance of maintaining stringent inclusion standards in future meta-analyses, so that future reviews are based on the most rigorous studies and so that future evaluations use more rigorous experimental designs. When it comes to program quality, Zief and Lauver's findings attest to the importance of including evaluation design as a dimension of quality.

The meta-analysis by Lauer and colleagues (2006) focused on the effects of out-of-school youth programs that were specifically designed to affect academic outcomes. The findings indicate that, for the most part, programs focused on academics can produce significant benefits in reading and math achievement among the

youth they serve. Lauer and colleagues also examined a number of factors that might account for variability in the degree to which programs produce positive outcomes. These factors included students' grade level, program focus, program duration, grouping structure (such as individual versus group tutoring), and methodological quality of the evaluation study. The meta-analytic findings indicated that several of these characteristics were significantly related to variability in both reading and math outcomes. However, the effects of these factors were not consistent across outcomes. That is, a program characteristic that was associated with positive reading outcomes was not necessarily related to positive math outcomes. For this reason, this meta-analysis indicates that afterschool programs can yield benefits in reading and math, but it provides little insight into the specific factors associated with broad program effectiveness. These findings attest to the complexity involved in determining which programs work under which circumstances for which students.

The widely referenced meta-analysis by Durlak and Weissberg (2007) focused on afterschool programming that was designed to improve social skills. Their analyses indicate that such afterschool programs can improve young people's academic performance as well as their personal adjustment and social skills. Much as Lauer and colleagues (2006) did, Durlak and Weissberg (2007) considered what factors might be associated with positive outcomes. They examined parents' level of involvement in their children's education; students' grade level; and whether programs included an academic component that specifically targeted improvement in grades, achievement test scores, school attendance, or homework completion. In general, their meta-analytic findings indicated that none of these factors was consistently associated with positive outcomes. The presence of an academic component did emerge as a significant predictor, but only on a single outcome—achievement test scores. That is, programs that included academic programming were more likely to affect achievement scores but not other academic outcomes.

Durlak and Weissberg (2007) identified four characteristics of quality social skills programming that were consistently associated with positive outcomes in all three outcome domains: personal adjustment, social skills, and academic performance. These four criteria were:

- **S**equenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives
- **A**ctive forms of learning
- **F**ocus of at least one program component on developing personal or social skills
- **E**xplicit targeting of specific academic, personal, or social skills

These four "SAFE" dimensions were used to sort programs into two groups. One group consisted of afterschool programs in which all four SAFE criteria were present. The other group consisted of programs in which only some or none of the SAFE criteria were present. Durlak and Weissberg then tested their hypothesis by comparing the effectiveness of the group of SAFE programs to that of the group of non-SAFE programs. Their results indicated that SAFE programs that met all four criteria showed significant positive effects in seven of the eight total outcome domains: child self-perceptions, school bonding, positive social behaviors, problem behaviors, drug use, achievement tests, and school grades. Programs in the non-SAFE group did not show positive results in any outcome domain.

These qualitative and quantitative reviews of afterschool program effectiveness research indicate that programs can benefit young people in terms of their social and emotional functioning, academics, health behaviors, and basic safety. As the body of program evaluation research grows, what emerges as the most striking (and yet commonsensical) finding is that program effectiveness varies considerably, depending on both the context of the program and on what actually occurs in the program. When we focus on understanding the dimensions of variability, rather than on making sweeping generalizations about all afterschool programs, this effectiveness research makes an important contribution to the empirical foundation of the program quality movement.

Until recently, opinions about what constitutes a high-quality afterschool program had outpaced available research.

How or *Why* Afterschool Programs Work: Defining Program Quality

Early program evaluation research provided a snapshot of the kinds of factors that contribute to program variability. However, these evaluation studies were generally limited in their ability to answer the question, "*Why* do programs work?" That is, "Which program practices are most important in yielding good outcomes?" Until

recently, opinions about what constitutes a high-quality afterschool program had outpaced available research. However, afterschool researchers and evaluators are now paying considerable attention to identifying the critical elements of successful afterschool programs.

Varying Perspectives

Formulations of what constitutes quality in afterschool programs have relied on a variety of different sources of information, generally including a combination of expert opinion and existing empirical research. Expert opinion encompasses professionals' firsthand experiences in planning and administering afterschool programs, expertise in service delivery, and knowledge of adolescent and positive youth development and the broader field of community youth development. Frequently, research from related fields—such as school-age childcare, youth development, and in-school educational practice—has been applied to definitions of quality in afterschool programs (Little, 2007). This was due in part to the limited amount of research that had focused specifically on defining and measuring afterschool program quality.

Afterschool researchers have repeatedly noted that the field needs more and better empirical evidence related to program quality (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005; Granger, Durlak, Yohalem, & Reisner, 2007; Little, 2007; Metz, Goldsmith, & Arbreton, 2008; Shernoff & Vandell, 2008). The empirical evidence that is available consists mostly of descriptive data from correlational studies. Correlational studies help to document the co-occurrence of certain program characteristics with desirable outcomes, but these studies cannot explain causal links. That is, they cannot determine what program practices caused improvements in participants' academic performance or social and emotional development.

Process measures are another important element of more rigorous investigations of program quality. A focus on process data, as opposed to an exclusive focus on outcome data, provides further insight into the determinants of program quality. Process evaluations generally address questions such as, "Who is being served?" and "What actually happened in the program?" (Sabatelli, Anderson, & LaMotte, 2005). Bodilly and Beckett (2005) use the term "implementation analysis" to refer to this sort of process evaluation. In afterschool research,

the process domain encompasses characteristics of participants, the broader program context, and what actually takes place in the program. When combined with outcome measures, process data allow researchers to document which students, in which programs, under which circumstances, have the best outcomes. When process-outcome studies include a control condition, they provide researchers with information about causal relationships between program participation and outcome. Such information is crucial for determining what constitutes a high-quality program. As the field accumulates more empirical data of this sort, it will be able to further refine its definition of program quality.

At this stage of the field's development, however, most formulations of afterschool program quality are based on a combination of expert opinion, research from adjacent areas of inquiry, correlational studies, and, occasionally, a few more rigorous studies. The result has been a number of different definitions of program quality that vary in their level of specificity (Granger et al., 2007). Many of these definitions take the form of conceptual models based on afterschool researchers' efforts to integrate results from a variety of outcome studies into a coherent account of optimal program functioning. Other definitions of program quality emerge "from the field," that is, from the work of practitioners and evaluators who are using observational measures to document and evaluate what occurs in afterschool programs. The next two sections review definitions of program quality in each of these categories.

> Some quality frameworks also propose a particular interrelationship among program domains, resulting in a sort of causal theory about how program quality affects youth outcomes.

Frameworks from Outcome Research

The afterschool literature reflects a growing number of quality frameworks, generally based on a youth development perspective, that derive from existing outcome research. All of these frameworks offer recommendations regarding what domains of afterschool programming are most important for achieving positive youth outcomes. Some quality frameworks also propose a particular interrelationship among program domains, resulting in a sort of causal theory about how program quality affects youth outcomes. The six outcome-research-based quality formulations reviewed next have clear common themes, as well as a few differences, related to afterschool program quality.

Metz, Goldsmith, and Arbreton (2008) synthesize evidence related to afterschool program outcomes, giving special attention to the developmental needs of preteens. Based on afterschool outcome research, Metz and colleagues define program quality in terms of six dimensions, some with more research support than others:
• Focused and intentional strategy
• Exposure (duration, intensity, and breadth)
• Supportive relationships
• Family engagement
• Cultural competence
• Continuous program improvement

Unlike most of the other definitions of quality reviewed below, Metz and colleagues not only present these six dimensions but also propose a particular relationship among them, suggesting that focused, intentional programming and continuous program improvement are essential for the achievement of quality in the other four areas.

Metz and colleagues' (2008) formulation also is unique in its inclusion of cultural competence as a dimension of afterschool program quality. They argue that programs that promote cultural competence are more likely to have youth who feel psychologically safe, actively engaged, and committed to fostering community partnerships. Other afterschool professionals have called for offering programming that enhances youth's cultural competence, given the diversity of children and youth being served in afterschool programs and the developmental importance of culture as a dimension of identity (The Colorado Trust Afterschool Initiative, 2002; Kennedy, Bronte-Tinkew, & Matthew, 2007; Oakland Afterschool Coordinating Team, 2002; Olsen, Bhattacharya, & Scharf, 2006). Metz and colleagues suggest that cultural competence is a key dimension of program quality that should be infused into all aspects of program functioning.

Researchers at the Forum for Youth Investment (Pittman, Smith, & Finn, 2008; Smith & Van Egeren, 2008) have developed a framework for afterschool program quality that emphasizes measuring quality at the point of service—where programs come into contact with youth and affect what participants actually experience. This framework is based on program evaluation research and developmental theories of motivation and learning. These researchers propose that a high-quality program is comprised of four hierarchically related domains: a safe environment, a supportive environment, social interaction, and engagement. According to this

perspective, providing a safe, supportive environment establishes a foundation that fosters effective staff-youth-peer interactions. These interactions, in turn, promote youth engagement—an element of programming that has been shown to correlate with positive youth outcomes (Smith & Van Egeren, 2008).

Like the two groups of researchers discussed above, Little and colleagues (2008) conclude that the most effective programs are those that ensure access to and sustained participation in the afterschool program. This conclusion is consistent with many studies indicating that positive outcomes are more likely when youth participate in a program more frequently and over a longer period of time (Shernoff & Vandell, 2008). Little and colleagues also conclude that effective programs have well-established connections with families, schools, and other key contexts for youth. Considerable research has supported the idea that the greater the number of supportive environments available to youth and the greater the consistency across settings in reinforcing positive attitudes and behavior, the greater the likelihood that youth will show gains in academic achievement, social skills, and emotional development (Benson, 2002; Chaskin & Baker, 2006; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; HFRP, 2004; Shernoff & Vandell, 2008).

Little and colleagues (2008) also assert that high-quality programs also offer appropriate supervision and structure for participants, a well-prepared staff, and intentional programming. They cite research that relates negative youth outcomes to lack of supervision after school. The need for a well-prepared staff is supported by research that has consistently linked the quality of youth-staff relationships both to outcomes and to the level of youth engagement in the program. Finally, the study refers to the work of Durlak and Weissberg (2007) as support for the importance of intentional programming, defined as having clear programmatic goals and strong preparation of staff to execute goals.

Beckett, Hawken, and Jacknowitz (2001) conducted a systematic review of afterschool research, using meta-analytic techniques to develop a list of program practices associated with positive outcomes. The researchers paid careful attention to both the quality and quantity of the available evidence supporting each practice. To be included in their list, a program practice had to be mentioned in at least three publications. Each practice was given a score indicating the level of research support for that practice. The researchers produced a list of 18 practices that comprised their formulation of program quality.

Staff characteristics:
- Training
- Education
- Compensation

Community contacts:
- Involvement of families
- Use of volunteers
- Partnerships with community-based organizations

Program characteristics:
- Variety of activities*
- Flexibility of programming*
- Emotional climate*
- Child-to-staff ratio
- Total enrollment
- Mixing of age groups
- Age-appropriate activities
- Space availability
- Continuity and complementarity with day school programs
- Clear goals and evaluation of program
- Materials
- Attention to health and safety

Three program characteristics, marked with an asterisk above, were scored as having strong empirical support: variety of activities, flexibility of programming, and emotional climate. Most of the other practices were found to have moderate support.

More recently, Bodilly and Beckett (2005) reviewed available research and theory related to afterschool program quality. They examined literature on youth development, school-age care, and quality in educational settings to develop a list of nine afterschool program quality domains:
- A clear mission
- High expectations and positive social norms
- Safe and healthy environment
- Supportive emotional climate
- Small total enrollment
- Stable and well-trained staff
- Appropriate content and pedagogy (relative to children's needs and to program's mission) that provides a variety of activities and opportunities for engagement

- Integrated family and community partnerships
- Frequent assessment

Each of the nine quality domains were endorsed by at least two of the three literature bases the researchers examined. Bodilly and Beckett describe their list as a set of program components that are "likely, although not proven, to produce effective OST [out-of-school time] programming" (p. 73–74).

Durlak and Weissberg's (2007) meta-analysis is frequently cited in the reviews discussed above. As mentioned previously, Durlak and Weissberg's four SAFE criteria are:
- Sequenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives
- Active forms of learning
- Focus of at least one program component on developing personal or social skills
- Explicit targeting of specific academic, personal, or social skills

Durlak and Weissberg's findings not only highlight the potential importance of these four program characteristics, but also suggest that program quality may be holistic. For example, academic benefits may be best achieved when a program offers a variety of high-quality components, rather than focusing solely on strong academic programming. Durlak and Weissberg's findings support the conclusion that high-quality afterschool programming affects a variety of desirable outcomes, including academic achievement and social development.

These six quality frameworks, based on outcome research and youth development theory, begin to explain variability in program effectiveness and move the afterschool field closer to a comprehensive definition of program quality. Although the field has yet to accumulate a substantial body of empirical evidence concerning the linkages between program processes and positive outcomes, these recent efforts are an important step forward.

Observations from Process Measures

Definitions of program quality are also emerging "from the field," where practitioners and evaluators are formulating quality standards as they use process measures to document what is occurring in afterschool programs. These observational measures are initially derived from

> These six quality frameworks, based on outcome research and youth development theory, begin to explain variability in program effectiveness and move the afterschool field closer to a comprehensive definition of program quality.

the researchers' values and assumptions as to what constitutes quality programming. The instruments are used by observers, who visit the afterschool programs under study and record the extent to which each quality indicator is present in the program. Several groups of afterschool researchers (e.g., HFRP, 2006; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2009) have examined the commonalities among these observational instruments and distilled a list of core features assessed in these measures.

In their compendium, Yohalem and Wilson-Ahlstrom (2009) selected instruments that were "research-based," that is, "informed by relevant child/youth development literature" (p. 8). In their review of nine instruments, they found that six dimensions of quality were present in all nine observational measures:

- Focus on staff-student relationships
- Safe and supportive program environment
- Active, sustained engagement of youth in program activities
- Encouragement of pro-social behaviors and norms
- Opportunities for youth to develop specific, targeted skills
- Predictable program structure and routine

Other domains present in many but not all measures included linkages between the program and the community, quality staffing, and a focus on youth leadership.

In 2006, researchers at the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) conducted a similar scan of afterschool program quality assessment tools. However, they also included local, state, and national statements of quality standards. Their search resulted in 42 separate articulations of program quality, which they then distilled into a list of 15 recurring areas of assessment:

- Programming, activities, and opportunities
- Human relationships
- Positive youth development
- Family, school, and community involvement
- Staffing
- Physical space and environment
- Program administration and management
- Safety, health, and nutrition
- Program planning and structure
- Assessment, evaluation, and accountability
- Organizational capacity

- Supervision and behavior management
- Sustainability
- Equal access
- Fiscal management

This list of fifteen areas of assessment overlaps substantially with the domains reflected in Yohalem and Wilson-Ahlstrom's (2009) compendium, as well as with the six frameworks based on reviews of evaluation research. Considered collectively, these eight formulations of afterschool program quality indicate that the field is indeed converging on a common vision of the essential characteristics of high-quality afterschool programs. These definitions of program quality direct our attention to the domains of program functioning that appear to be most important for effecting positive outcomes. They also highlight the program practices and characteristics, within particular domains, that are key factors in the success of high-quality programs. Finally, several of these definitions of program quality contribute to a theory of how various dimensions of afterschool program quality are causally linked to positive youth outcomes.

> All of [the quality frameworks] address the paramount importance of programs' providing youth with *safe, supportive relationships and a positive emotional climate.*

Developing a Unified Picture of Program Quality

The eight quality frameworks reviewed above share clear commonalities in the domains of program functioning considered essential to program quality. All of them address the paramount importance of programs' providing youth with *safe, supportive relationships and a positive emotional climate*. Under this broad heading, nearly all of the quality frameworks highlight staff contributions to establishing a positive emotional climate. Some frameworks cite structural factors—such as staff being well trained, having small staff-to-participant ratios, and having adequate staff compensation—as supporting staff in establishing strong relationships with young people. Some quality frameworks also define *positive emotional climate* in terms of the types of processes or human interactions that occur in the program.

The various quality frameworks also emphasize the importance of afterschool programs' offering focused, intentional programming. Some frameworks emphasize program management that is focused and intentional, while others stress the importance of focused and inten-

tional activities. Such activities might be chosen to meet particular programmatic goals: targeting a specific set of social skills, building on previously established gains, meeting age-specific developmental needs, maximizing youth engagement, or providing participants with variety.

A third domain addressed across the afterschool program quality frameworks is strong partnerships with families, schools, and other community organizations. These partnerships are considered important for several reasons. Partnerships with families can facilitate youth engagement in the program. Partnerships with schools enable afterschool programs to coordinate the content of their services with school-based learning. Linkages to other community organizations can assist afterschool programs by making their services widely accessible to young people and by using the afterschool program to reinforce skills learned in other settings.

Another domain consistently cited in the various quality frameworks is the importance of young people's active participation and engagement in program activities. Several of the quality frameworks emphasize youth engagement, citing evidence that positive outcomes are more likely when youth participate in a program more frequently and over a longer period of time. However, it appears that the links between program engagement and positive youth outcomes are complex, multi-faceted, and holistic rather than direct. For instance, youth participation and engagement may be a predictor of positive youth outcomes, but they may also be an outcome of a quality program. Various formulations of program quality highlight programmatic factors such as availability of programming—how long the program is open, whether it is located where potential participants can access it—as important in affecting young people's levels of participation. Several quality frameworks suggest that offering a broad range of program activities is important in fostering youth engagement. Formulations of program quality consistently relate youth engagement to quality in the areas of supportive relationships, intentional programming, and outside partnerships.

A fifth common theme across the quality frameworks is the importance of a healthy, physically safe environment. Some of the quality frameworks reference the availability of nutritious snacks and opportunities for physical activity as important dimensions of quality. Having adequate space, supervision, and physical security is consistently associated with program quality. In some cases, physical safety and psychological safety are considered to be interrelated aspects of quality. While the literature on program quality does not describe in detail the indicators of physical safety, definitions of program quality seem to take physical safety as an essential, foundational dimension of program quality.

> Afterschool programs can be effective in enhancing academic achievement and social and emotional development. Programs that have a positive effect in one of these domains tend to achieve positive benefits in the others as well.

A final point of convergence across the definitions of program quality is the domain of program management, particularly management practices that support program sustainability and continuous program improvement. Several of the quality frameworks associate quality with having evaluation practices in place, with engaging in frequent assessment of program practices, and with using assessment to improve the program. Additionally, several of the frameworks point to the importance of high-quality program management and self-evaluation in promoting staff development and program activities. This correlation suggests that continuous program improvement, as one dimension of program quality, supports quality in other key domains of program functioning.

These six domains—supportive relationships, intentional programming, strong community partnerships, promotion of youth engagement, physical safety, and continuous quality improvement—represent clear points of convergence across the various definitions of program quality. The field is reaching a consensus regarding what aspects of program quality are important and how these dimensions of program quality fit into the overall picture of afterschool programming. See Figure 1 on page 10.

The Big Picture: Putting Quality Frameworks into Action

Considered collectively, the literature reviewed in this article indicates that the afterschool field is reaching agreement on several key points related to program quality.

Afterschool programs can be effective in enhancing academic achievement and social and emotional development. Programs that have a positive effect in one of these domains tend to achieve positive benefits in the

others as well. That is, successful programs appear to affect a range of outcomes, including academic performance and social and emotional development.

It also is clear that not all afterschool programs are equally effective. Experts and researchers have reached a general consensus that successful afterschool programs have a number of characteristics in common. The literature now offers several formulations of program quality that are rooted in the results of individual outcome studies, meta-analyses of outcome research, and a growing body of process research. At the same time, afterschool professionals have access to a variety of quality

- Assessing the degree to which a program is likely to produce positive youth outcomes
- Providing guidelines for implementing program improvements
- Developing guidelines for staff training
- Establishing a baseline for assessing changes in a program's quality over time

As the field gathers additional empirical data regarding what program practices define quality, it will also need to scientifically validate the measures it uses to assess quality, a process that has already begun (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2009). Moreover, as the afterschool field moves forward with implementing quality standards, a number of issues must be kept in mind. For example, although the field is paying increasing attention—both theoretical and empirical—to afterschool program quality, there remains relatively little research on how to implement quality standards and whether doing so actually

Figure 1: Unified Picture of Afterschool Program Quality
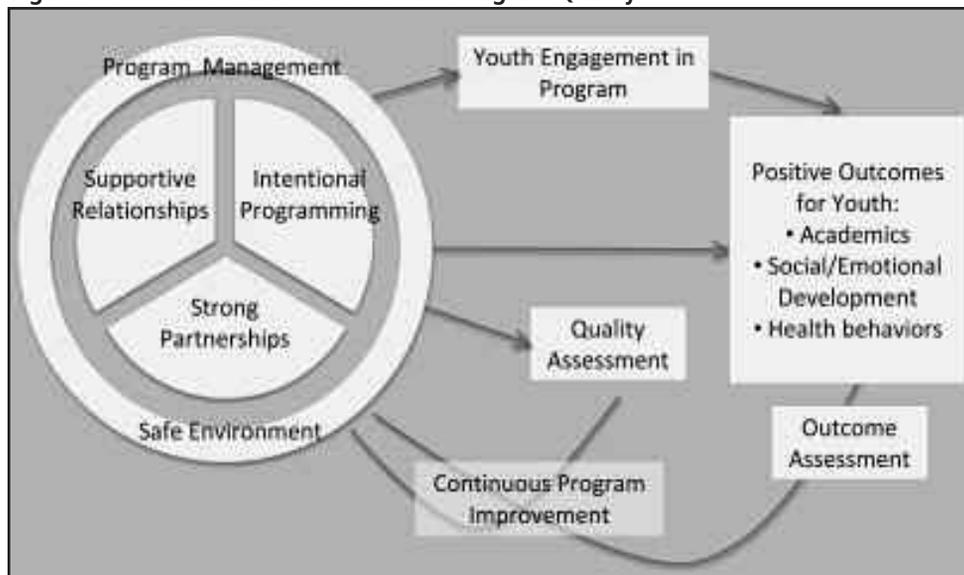
assessment tools that reflect the various ways that professionals "in the field" are defining program quality. Across the literature, formulations of program quality converge on common ground regarding what constitutes afterschool program quality. Our review suggests that six domains—supportive relationships, intentional programming, strong community partnerships, promotion of youth engagement, physical safety, and continuous quality improvement—represent the field's consensus on program quality.

Having established a relatively consistent set of quality indicators allows us to engage in activities that are useful to all stakeholders in afterschool programming, including:

improves programs (Granger et al., 2007). Granger and colleagues have emphasized the importance of conducting research on how to best implement quality improvement processes.

Additionally, from a practical standpoint, quality improvement requires working effectively with limited resources and prioritizing the dimensions of quality to be targeted. The frameworks of Metz and colleagues (2008) and of Pittman and colleagues (2008) offer suggestions for prioritizing various dimensions of quality. Pittman and colleagues emphasize safety and supportive relationships as the foundation that must be established before other dimensions of quality can be achieved. Metz and colleagues suggest

> Focused and intentional programming, engaging activities, and supportive staff relationships may be necessary, but they are not sufficient to ensure program success.

that focused, intentional activities and continuous program improvement are the essential features for achieving overall program quality.

In addition to these practical considerations, the afterschool field faces the broader theoretical and empirical task of determining how high-quality program practices affect, and are affected by, other factors known to be essential to positive youth outcomes. Research suggests that a high-quality program does not operate in isolation (Vandell, Reisner, & Peirce, 2007). Focused and intentional programming, engaging activities, and supportive staff relationships may be necessary, but they are not sufficient to ensure program success. Rather, an effective program requires successful interactions with the community (Smith & Van Egeren, 2008) and continual efforts to recruit and retain actively engaged youth who then become committed to the program (Shernoff & Vandell, 2008). As the afterschool field continues to refine its definition of program quality, quality standards ought to encourage practices that not only are associated with positive outcomes but also make the most of these moderating factors.

The field is becoming increasingly focused on the broader context in which afterschool programs operate. By utilizing both outcome and process research in a quality-driven model, the afterschool field is poised to undertake important program improvement efforts that result in broad, holistic benefits for the young people we serve.

Acknowledgements

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does your organization welcome participants with disabilities?

A New Assessment Tool

by Fred Galloway and Mary McAllister Shea

During the 2005–06 school year, more than 6.7 million children with disabilities received special education and related services in our public schools; this represents more than a 20 percent increase over the previous decade (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). These children, who are typically at risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, and emotional conditions, face a myriad of challenges as they navigate the public school environment, including being ignored, ostracized, and bullied more often than their non-disabled peers (Twyman, 2009; Thompson, Whitney, & Smith, 1994).

Unfortunately, such disadvantages are not limited to the public schools. Students with disabilities are less likely than their non-disabled peers to complete high school; as adults, they are more likely to experience extreme isolation, high levels of unemployment, dependence on social services and families, and lack of meaningful relationships (Harris & Associates, 2004; Condeluci, 1995; Perske & Perske, 1988).

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One important place where children with disabilities may be able to interact positively with other children is in afterschool programs. However, there is no empirical data on the extent of participation in afterschool programs beyond anecdotal accounts from youth development professionals at workshops and conferences suggesting that enrollment of children with disabilities is increasing. Even worse, providers have no idea whether these children's afterschool experiences are positive or negative—not to mention what their parents, youth development staff, and program leaders might think about their experiences. In other words, despite the ability of afterschool providers to assess the extent to which their curriculum and activities are age-appropriate and their staff-to-child ratios low enough to support meaningful engagement, providers have no real idea whether their environment is truly welcoming to children and young adults with disabilities.

To begin to remedy this problem, we introduce a statistically reliable and valid survey instrument, the ODMI-IWD, that can help afterschool providers determine the extent to which their organizations truly welcome children and youth with disabilities. After describing how we constructed, tested, and piloted the instrument, we report in this paper on our findings when we administered the ODMI-IWD to five large-scale afterschool providers in southern California that together served more than 30,000 students. When we discuss the results of our analysis, we pay particular attention to two things:

- The extent to which each of the five organizations was demonstrating inclusionary practices for children with disabilities
- Differences among the responses of executive staff and board leadership, staff members, parents of children with disabilities, and parents of children without disabilities

Engaging all four of these stakeholder groups should catalyze the process of developing an inclusive environment in afterschool programs. We hope that the ODMI-IWD instrument not only will increase awareness and

> Despite the ability of afterschool providers to assess the extent to which their curriculum and activities are age-appropriate and their staff-to-child ratios low enough to support meaningful engagement, providers have no real idea whether their environment is truly welcoming to children and young adults with disabilities.

provide a starting point for strategic planning, but ultimately will support interventions toward a culture that truly welcomes all children, youth, and families.

Methods
Developing the Instrument
Our detailed literature search revealed no reliable instrument that measures the extent to which afterschool organizations are creating environments that truly serve the interests of children with disabilities. However, we *did* find an instrument that measures the extent to which institutions of higher education have created an environment that serves the interests of under-represented students and faculty. This instrument, the Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion (ODMI), was originally developed in 1998 by Moises Baron and Rubin Mitchell in an effort to institutionalize cultural diversity in a given institution. The fact that the instrument has proven popular enough to have been used extensively at the University of San Diego as well as other institutions of higher education, including Vassar College and St. Mary's University, gave us the confidence to use the ODMI as our reference point in developing the instrument used in this study.

That instrument, the Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion for Individuals with Disabilities (ODMI-IWD), is similar to the Baron and Mitchell instrument in that it examines several conditions or dimensions critical to the process of inclusion:

- **Diversity:** the array of existing inclusionary practices in the organization as well as the actual representation of individuals with disabilities
- **Differential treatment:** the extent to which individuals with disabilities are treated differently from non-disabled persons
- **Congruency:** the level of alignment between the espoused organizational values and actual behaviors
- **Motivational imperative:** the urgency with which the organization attempts to include individuals with disabilities
- **Experience:** the actual experiences of individuals with disabilities in the organization

While the original ODMI contained 22 statements to which respondents were asked to respond in deciding how inclusive their organization was in its beliefs and actions, we began constructing our instrument by expanding the number of potential questions in each area to ensure that all aspects of the five dimensions were covered. This expansion included writing some entirely new questions as well as modifying the language of existing ODMI questions to focus on individuals with disabilities.

The expanded set of questions went through several detailed levels of review, beginning with a panel of faculty experts well-versed in survey methodology. The review then moved on to focus groups comprising stakeholders in the provision of afterschool care: board members and staff of afterschool organizations and parents of children, both with and without disabilities, who use these organizations' services. At each level of review, potential questions were screened for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness.

This labor-intensive process produced the final version of the ODMI-IWD, which contained a total of 40 questions divided evenly among the five dimensions; Figure 1 displays a sample question for each of the dimensions. Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with eight statements in each dimension on a five-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 indicated *strongly agree* and a score of 5 indi-

cated *strongly disagree*. For each respondent, we then constructed an index for each one of the five dimensions by simply calculating the average score for a given respondent in that dimension. This process produced a series of indices in which higher scores were associated with a more inclusive and welcoming environment for individuals with disabilities. Most respondents completed the survey in its entirety; for those that did not, we used their surveys if they left no more than one question unanswered in each of the dimensions. For these individuals, we simply used their average responses to the other seven questions in calculating their overall index score.

Of course, before using the results from the ODMI-IWD for organizational change or internal policy development, users must be assured that the instrument is both statistically reliable and valid. Fortunately, the ODMI-IWD passes easily on both counts. In addition to the numerous steps described above that ensured both content and face validity, we also checked to see if the Cronbach's alpha statistic, which measures the internal consistency of the questions comprising each of the five constructs, was large enough for robust analysis. Fortunately, each of our dimensions cleared the traditional bar of .70 (Groth-Marnat, 1997; Babbie, 1990). Our *diversity* measure came out at .72 and the other four measures—*differential treatment*, *congruency*, *motivational imperative*, and *experience*—at .88. These statistics suggest that, in addition to being a valid instrument, the ODMI-IWD is also a reliable one.

Survey Participants and Procedures

The purpose of this research, conducted in 2006, was to measure the extent to which four groups of stakeholders, including both providers and consumers of afterschool services, perceived that their organizations were inclusive of and welcoming to individuals with disabilities. These stakeholders—executive staff and board leadership, program staff, parents of children with disabilities, and parents of chil-

Figure 1: Sample Questions from the Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion for Individuals with Disabilities (ODMI-IWD)

Diversity	Few, if any, efforts are made in this organization to recruit individuals with disabilities as employees or board members.
Differential Treatment	Leadership confronts the issue of differential treatment of individuals with disabilities only when prompted by external factors such as the threat of a lawsuit, criticism, or negative publicity.
Congruency	This organization has developed a few "token" programs or initiatives to address the issue of including individuals with disabilities.
Motivational Imperative	Orientation for new members or customers does not include sharing the organization's philosophy of including children with disabilities.
Experience	Individuals with disabilities are isolated within the organization or alone much of the time.

dren without disabilities—came from five mid-size-to-large Boys and Girls Club organizations in San Diego County, representing 45 physical sites that served about 30,000 children and young adults. These five organizations were randomly selected from a purposeful sample of nine similarly sized Boys and Girls Clubs that we knew to have a history of serving children and youth with disabilities. The original sample was purposeful because we needed clubs that were large enough to serve a sufficient number of students with disabilities so that we could make meaningful statistical comparisons among the various stakeholder groups.

Once we had drawn our sample of clubs, we contacted their executive directors by telephone to request their participation. Four of the five clubs quickly agreed to participate; the club that refused was replaced by the next club drawn from the purposeful sample. Depending on the preference of the executive director, the organization's program staff and leaders were surveyed either electronically through a commercial website or by traditional paper-and-pencil methods. In each club, the leaders surveyed were the executive director, the director of operations, and the entire board of directors.

Parents responded to paper-and-pencil surveys distributed in "parent packets" by the program director or

The purpose of this research, conducted in 2006, was to measure the extent to which four groups of stakeholders, including both providers and consumers of afterschool services, perceived that their organizations were inclusive of and welcoming to individuals with disabilities.

diversity coordinator at each club and then mailed back to us. One club bundled parent responses to mail to us; parents from the other clubs mailed their own surveys. This method of distribution is important for at least two reasons. First, the decentralized distribution process meant that we could not calculate meaningful response rates for the parents; some program directors kept track of how many packets were handed out, but others just left them in large piles that were either picked up or thrown away. Second, this distribution process allowed for the possibility that program directors would hand the packets only to overtly satisfied parents, resulting in sample selection bias.

Despite these concerns, response rates for leaders and staff were fairly impressive, with response rates ranging from 25 percent at Club 4 to 84 percent at Club 3. Table 1 shows that we received a total of 216 usable surveys, almost evenly split between parents (50.5 percent) and leadership and staff (49.5 percent). Interestingly, the club with the lowest response rate, Club 4, appeared to be the least engaged in the process, suggesting that if an organization is not doing well on an issue, leaders and staff may be less likely to respond to a survey about it, even when complete confidentiality is guaranteed.

Table 1: Number of Responses from the Participating Clubs, Leaders and Staff, and Parents

	Total Reponses	Leaders and Staff	Response Rates for Leaders and Staff	Parents*
Club 1	43	24	41%	19
Club 2	68	27	54%	41
Club 3	50	27	84%	23
Club 4	28	16	25%	12
Club 5	27	13	43%	14
	216	**107**	**45%**	**109**

*As noted in text, we cannot calculate a response rate for parents because of the methods used to distribute the surveys.

Findings
To What Extent Were the Clubs Practicing Inclusion?

Since one of the main purposes of developing the ODMI-IWD was to give organizations an instrument that would allow them to assess the extent to which their organizations welcome individuals with disabilities, our first question is naturally "How well were these five Boys and Girls Clubs creating such a welcoming environment?"

To answer this question, Table 2 presents, for each club, the scores for the five dimensional indices for each club and the overall average score for each club, calculated as the simple average of all five index scores, as well as the standard deviations

associated with these measures. The final row shows the average index and overall scores for all five clubs.

The overall average scores are all in a fairly narrow range suggesting little between-club variation, with all the clubs scoring between 3.66 and 3.99. To get a sense of what these scores mean in terms of how the clubs were actually doing in creating a welcoming environment for individuals with disabilities, we transformed all five overall scores into percentage scores. For example, the overall score for Club 1 was 3.99 on our five-point scale, which translates into a percentage score of 79.8 percent. Similarly, the percentage scores for Clubs 2–5 are 73.2, 77.4, 73.2, and 75.6 percent, respectively. Taken together, these scores suggest that the clubs were doing at least an average job, since all of the scores were somewhere in the 70th percentile. To use a grading analogy, all of the clubs passed; however, Clubs 1 and 3, the two clubs with the longest history of supporting inclusion and with the strongest support from their leadership, scored a higher pass than did Clubs 2, 4, and 5.

In addition to the overall scores by club, Table 2 also presents the average index scores for all clubs as well as their standard deviations, which can be thought of as a measure of consensus among respondents: the lower the standard deviation, the higher the level of consensus. Not surprisingly, there is little variation among the five index averages. Although the scores in the *diversity* area were clearly the lowest (3.67) and the *motivational imperative* area the highest (3.88), the other three measures resulted an average score of 3.81. More importantly, four of the standard deviations associated with the five overall index scores are tightly clustered between .72 and .76, but the *diversity* index is significantly lower,

at .55, meaning that there was more consensus among respondents in the area of *diversity* than in the other four dimensions. This is especially important because respondents indicated that the five organizations were performing the worst in the area of *diversity*. From a policy perspective, it clearly helps to know that the greatest consensus was in the area that was perceived to need the most improvement.

Table 2 also reveals the areas in which each individual club is the strongest and weakest. One of the values of the ODMI-IWD is that it provides crucial information for developing internal policies aimed at improving perceived areas of weakness. For example, the weakest area for Clubs 1, 2, and 5 is *diversity;* for Club 3, it is *differential treatment;* and for Club 4, it is *experience.* Conversely, the area of greatest relative strength for Clubs 1 and 3 is *motivational imperative*, for Clubs 2 and 4, *differential treatment*, and for Club 5, *experience.*

Did Perceptions Vary by Stakeholder Group?

In addition to describing the extent to which stakeholders felt that the Boys and Girls Clubs under study were practicing inclusion of individuals with disabilities, our methodology also allowed us to compare the perceptions of different stakeholder groups. Variation among the four stakeholder groups—leaders, staff, parents of children with disabilities, and parents of children without disabilities—is important for a number of reasons. For example, if all four stakeholder groups agree in their assessment of the organization's strengths and weaknesses, then the process of institutional change can move forward with significantly less debate than if only some of the stakeholders believe that change is needed. Another important reason involves the potential disconnect between those working for the clubs *versus* those being served by them. Oftentimes leaders and staff have a more insular perspective than do the clients, so that those "on the inside" may have an inflated vision of how well they are doing. For these reasons and more, it makes good sense for service providers to

Table 2: Index Scores, Overall Scores, and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses), by Club

	Diversity	Differential Treatment	Congruency	Motivational Imperative	Experience	Overall Score
Club 1	3.77 (.49)	4.06 (.76)	4.06 (.71)	4.09 (.70)	3.99 (.75)	3.99
Club 2	3.58 (.58)	3.76 (.65)	3.62 (.74)	3.67 (.85)	3.69 (.72)	3.66
Club 3	3.76 (.50)	3.71 (.72)	3.88 (.70)	4.10 (.65)	3.91 (.80)	3.87
Club 4	3.61 (.58)	3.79 (.71)	3.71 (.75)	3.67 (.74)	3.53 (.61)	3.66
Club 5	3.65 (.64)	3.72 (.83)	3.77 (.84)	3.87 (.69)	3.91 (.70)	3.78
ALL CLUBS	**3.67 (.55)**	**3.81 (.72)**	**3.81 (.75)**	**3.88 (.76)**	**3.81 (.74)**	**3.79**

understand the concerns of both their customers and those providing the services; this sort of triangulation is critical if organizations are to become truly inclusive environments for all potential clients.

Given the importance of understanding the perspectives of all four stakeholder groups, in this section we use independent sample t-tests at the p=.01 level, which corresponds to the 99 percent confidence in statistical significance, to compare these perspectives. We choose this high level of statistical significance to ensure that any inferences regarding differences among groups are robust—an assurance that is especially important since both between-group and within-group differences for the five clubs were fairly small.

The index averages for the different stakeholder groups are presented in Table 3, which reveals apparent differences among leaders, staff, and parents with respective overall index averages of 4.13, 3.85, and 3.61—that is, the leaders had the highest estimation of the club's inclusiveness, the staff the next highest, and the parents the lowest. One important question is whether these differences occurred by chance or were representative of differences in the underlying populations from which the samples were drawn. We therefore begin our comparisons with perhaps the most basic one of all: the perspectives of those delivering the services (leaders and staff) *versus* those receiving the services (parents).

> Oftentimes leaders and staff have a more insular perspective than do the clients, so that those "on the inside" may have an inflated vision of how well they are doing.

Table 4: Index Scores for Leaders and Staff and for All Parents

	Leaders and Staff	All Parents
Diversity	3.81	3.55
Differential Treatment	3.98	3.63
Congruency	4.01	3.58
Motivational Imperative	4.06	3.70
Experience	4.01	3.61
Overall Average	**3.97**	**3.61**

To test for differences between leaders and staff on the one hand and parents on the other, we first needed to aggregate the responses of leaders and staff as well as our two groups of parents. Table 4 shows that the overall averages— 3.97 for those providing services and 3.61 for those receiving them—suggest significant differences between the two groups. In fact, the results of our independent sample t-tests suggest that these differences are both real and significant, since all five indices as well as the overall measure were significant at the p=.01 level. Moreover, these differences were always in the same direction: The service providers consistently thought that they were doing a better job of creating a welcoming environment and providing quality services for children with disabilities than did their clients. While this finding is perhaps not surprising, it highlights the importance of talking to *all* relevant stakeholders—especially those outside the organization—before reaching any conclusions on the efficacy of efforts to create an authentically inclusive organization.

The significant differences between the perspectives of service providers and their clients led us to look for differences between the leaders and the program staff of the five clubs. The mean scores presented in Table 3 suggest that there may indeed be differences, since the overall mean score for leaders was 4.13 while the corresponding mean for program staff was 3.85. After conducting the appropriate series of statistical tests, this

Table 3: Index Scores for Leaders, Staff, Parents of Children without Disabilities, and Parents of Children with Disabilities

	Leaders	Staff	Parents of Children without Disabilities	Parents of Children with Disabilities
Diversity	3.86	3.76	3.56	3.52
Differential Treatment	4.08	3.84	3.64	3.62
Congruency	4.38	3.76	3.59	3.57
Motivational Imperative	4.22	3.95	3.61	3.83
Experience	4.10	3.94	3.67	3.52
Overall Average	**4.13**	**3.85**	**3.61**	**3.61**

hypothesis was at least partially confirmed in that two of the indices (*differential treatment* and *congruency*), as well as the overall measure, showed significant differences at the p=.01 level. In addition, the *motivational imperative* index almost reached the p=.01 threshold. These differences were always in the same direction: Leaders consistently thought that the organization was more inclusive than did program staff. This finding suggests that the perceptions of those closest to service delivery were more in tune with those of their clients than were leaders' perceptions. We suspect that leaders may be so far removed from daily programming that they think the organization is practicing inclusion simply because they physically see children and youth with disabilities in the club. However, physical presence alone does not constitute inclusion.

To test this hypothesis, we also compared the perceptions of staff those with three groups of clients: all parents, parents of children with disabilities, and parents of children without disabilities. We found that when the responses of staff were compared with those of all parents, significant differences emerged at the p=.01 level in two areas, *diversity* and *experience*, with staff members rating their organization's environment as more welcoming than did parents. We also found similar differences at the p=.01 level between staff and parents with children with disabilities in the area of *experience*, as well as differences between staff and parents with children without disabilities in the area of *motivational imperative*. Again, all of the differences were in the same direction, with staff having a more favorable view than did parents, albeit less favorable than leaders' views. We found no differences between parents of children with and without disabilities, a finding that suggests that parental perspectives, at least among respondents, were similar on all five dimensions of inclusiveness.

Three Important Truths about Inclusiveness

Taken together, the results of our analysis have revealed at least three important truths about organizational inclusiveness. The first and perhaps most important is the need to query individuals both inside *and* outside the organization regarding the extent to which a particular environment is inclusive in terms of serving children and young adults with disabilities.

Our second truth illustrates the reason that both perspectives are critically important. The leaders who design the service delivery process often have a more favorable view of that process than do the program staff who implement it. Those who implement have, in turn,

a more favorable view of the organization's inclusiveness than do the recipients of the service, the parents of the children served.

When these two findings are combined with the creation of the ODMI-IWD, a statistically reliable and valid instrument designed to measure the extent to which an organization is promoting and practicing inclusion for individuals with disabilities, the third and perhaps most obvious truth emerges: the overwhelming need for organizations providing afterschool services to determine the extent to which their environment is welcoming to children and youth with disabilities.

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the differential role of youth development program participation for latina/o adolescents

by Ingrid Nelson

Over the next 20 years, experts predict that the number of Latina/o children in the U.S. will double, so that by the year 2025, one in four school children will be Latina/o (White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1998). Yet the academic achievement of Latina/os lags far behind that of other ethnic and racial groups. Only 63 percent of Latina/os ages 25 to 29 have graduated high school, compared to 87 percent of African Americans and 94 percent of both Asians and whites in the same age group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

In addition, only eight percent of Latina/os in this age group have completed four years of college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). For decades, and especially now in the era of No Child Left Behind, educators, policy analysts, and researchers have sought to pinpoint the causes of this now-infamous academic achievement gap, yet they overwhelmingly ignore the fact that youth

today spend only 25 percent of their waking hours on school work (Larson & Verma, 1999).

Theoretical explanations of Latina/o youths' academic attainment omit the role that out-of-school time (OST) activities may play, and few studies have explored the role of OST programming in the lives of Latina/o students. The purpose of this study is to investigate the long-term role of OST program participation in the context of Latina/o adolescents' pathways to college. Although a growing number of pre- and post-test design studies link positive outcomes to OST program involvement, few researchers have explored the long-term roles of OST participation, and none of those longitudinal studies have considered the influence of OST

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programs in the context of other supports available to youth. By looking at a group of Latina/o adolescents in community context—first in eighth grade and again in early adulthood—this study explores differences in the role that OST participation can play for Latina/o adolescents in their pathways to college.

Theories of Failure and Success

Competing and complementary explanations exist, but no theory yet predicts why many Latina/o youth follow national patterns of low achievement while others buck the trend. In the past, dominant sociological theories have focused on factors explaining students' failures. This outlook was aligned with intervention strategies seeking to minimize negative outcomes, such as dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, and drug abuse. With the advent of the positive youth development perspective, both research and practice have shifted toward explaining and promoting success. What follows is a brief encapsulation of dominant sociological theories explaining failure and low attainment among Latina/o youth, followed by a brief explanation of dominant theories accounting for success and high attainment among Latina/o youth. Finally, I draw on these theories to build a theoretical framework for this study.

Proponents of the *deficit* explanation commonly attach academic outcomes to demographic data, so that traits ascribed to categories of people appear to cause low or high achievement in school. For example, even after controlling for family background variables, researchers found that students of Mexican origin were less likely to complete 12th grade than their white peers (Warren, 1996). However, deficit theorists fail to explain why many Latina/o students drop out of school even though they do not match the typical at-risk profile (Fernandez & Shu, 1988); factors that increase the odds of dropping out for African-American and white students, such as misbehavior, having changed schools, and low grades, do not increase the odds for Hispanic students (Rumberger, 1995).

Structural explanations claim that certain school traits cause low achievement among minority students (Valverde & Scribner, 2001). For example, Latina/o students are generally exposed to less qualified teachers and fewer resources per student. These explanations fail to

account for diversity within the Latina/o population and cannot explain how high-achieving youth emerge from subpar schools.

Reproduction theorists assert that schools act as instruments of the dominant group in society; they are intentionally designed to foster low achievement among minority students, thus continually reproducing the status quo in social relations (Bourdieu, 1973; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). These theories strip minority youth and families of any agency in the school system and, again, overlook diversity within the Latina/o population (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Stepping away from the notion that youth act as passive recipients to their environments, *resistance* theory recognizes low-achievement behaviors as challenges to certain aspects of schooling: When students believe that graduation will not improve their life chances, they develop identities in opposition to school culture (Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1995). Current research counters these claims with evidence that some marginalized youth instead develop school-oriented identities (Carter, 2005; Flores-González, 2002).

While deficit, structural, reproduction, and resistance theories may partially account for low academic achievement among minority students, these explanations fail to account for the diversity among Latina/o youth. Many Latina/os drop out of school even though they do not match typical at-risk profiles (Fernandez & Shu, 1988). Academic achievement does not come at the expense of ethnic identity for all groups (Carter, 2005; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994). Individual agency must be considered in tandem with systemic constraints and opportunities.

Recent sociological research weaves together impacts of both personal and structural factors, shifting its focus from failures to successes. *Social capital* theorists agree that low achievement has structural roots but locate success in the individual's ability to navigate the educational system. Successful Latina/o youth must seek out supportive adults in their school in order to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for academic progress (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Role identity theory explains that successful Latina/o youth are those who effectively reconcile the differences

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and manage the transitions between school and home (Flores-González, 2002). Students are most likely to manage these transitions well if their worlds are congruent, but many others succeed by adopting aspects of school culture while still maintaining their home culture—in other words, accommodating without assimilating (Mehan et al., 1994). Developing this all-encompassing "school kid" identity requires that the "school kid" role be socially appropriate both at school and at home, that social supports be available to the youth, and that rewards exist for adopting that role. It also requires the presence of identity-enhancing events and the absence of identity-threatening events (Flores-González, 2002). Students are successful in school to the extent that they can adopt and sustain the "school kid" identity. This process can be facilitated or hindered by school staffs and structures.

I argue that OST programs can also facilitate the adoption of the "school kid" identity. This study brings together social capital and role identity theories, examining OST programs as settings that simultaneously provide access to the social capital necessary for academic attainment and college matriculation as well as opportunities for the social support, relationships, and rewards necessary for young people to construct and maintain a positive "school kid" identity in the face of adversity.

How OST Programs Help Build Social Capital and Role Identity

While the best teachers go beyond the basic cognitive tasks of schooling by working to meet children's physical, social, and emotional needs, more often these requirements must be attended to outside of school. Afterschool programs, weekend activities, and summer camps seek to supplement schooling by emphasizing multiple aspects of adolescent development. Specifically, many of the ways that OST programs have been shown to benefit participants align with social capital and role identity theories of academic attainment among Latina/o adolescents.

First, OST programs provide a context for youth to connect with caring and knowledgeable adults in their communities (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005); such connections are the basis for building social capital. Among Latina/o adolescents, academic success arises from the combined influences of loving parents and sup-

portive non-parent adults (Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006). The presence of non-parent adults who can provide information becomes crucial to Latina/o youth striving to overcome barriers to college-going, including minimal adult supervision, misinformation, and poorly informed choices (Immerwahr, 2003; Zalaquett, 2006). Staff members of OST programs often cater to smaller groups of youth and thus demand higher standards than do schoolteachers. Personal attention from staff members also fosters better work habits, increasing efficacy and raising educational aspirations (American Youth Policy Forum, 2004; Bodilly & Beckett, 2005).

Second, OST programs provide opportunities necessary for school engagement and positive identity development. Studies link participation in extracurricular activities to numerous positive outcomes, including increased academic achievement (Broh, 2002; Schreiber & Chambers, 2002); lower dropout rates (Mahoney, 2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997); and psychosocial improvements such as stronger self-image, positive social development, and reductions in risk-taking behavior (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005). Involvement in extracurricular activities is also associated with positive school-related attitudes and behaviors such as school connectedness and reduced truancy and delinquency (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006a, 2006b; Jordan & Nettles, 2000; Thompson, Iachan, Overpeck, Ross, & Gross, 2006). Programs provide youth with leadership opportunities and encourage the acquisition of life skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem solving (American Youth Policy Forum, 2004).

In addition, the voluntary nature of programs empowers youth. While in school, students reported high concentration and low intrinsic motivation; during unstructured leisure time, students reported low concentration and high intrinsic motivation. Research showed that students report simultaneously experiencing high concentration and high motivation only while participating in structured voluntary activities, such as clubs and sports (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Larson & Kleiber, 1993). That disadvantaged students demonstrate the largest gains from participation shows that out-of-school-time programs can chip away at the achievement gap (Camp, 1990; Gerber, 1996; Holloway, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). Flores-González (2002) argues that

> OST programs provide opportunities necessary for school engagement and positive identity development.

developing a "school kid" identity is contingent on factors including the social appropriateness of the "school kid" or "good kid" role, social support, prestige and rewards, extensive and intensive relationships, and the presence of identity-enhancing events. As discussed above, many of these factors have been tied to OST participation.

Students from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds participate in structured activities at different rates. Youth from higher-income families are more likely than their peers from lower-income families to participate in all kinds of extracurricular activities, in a greater number of activities and with greater frequency (Bouffard et al., 2006). In most activities, white youth are overrepresented and Latina/o youth are underrepresented. Although few studies have been done on why participation rates differ, researchers speculate that racial and ethnic group differences may result from some of the factors driving socio-economic gaps, as well as from factors specific to different racial and ethnic groups such as linguistic and cultural differences between families and activity providers (Bouffard et al., 2006). According to Feldman and Matjasko's (2005) review of the literature, few empirical investigations of participation and educational outcomes of adolescents from different racial and ethnic groups exist. While we know that Latina/o youth frequently experience limited access to extracurricular activities (Flores-González, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999), few studies explore what role OST programs play for Latina/o youth.

Studying Latina/o OST Participation in Context

The purpose of this study is to investigate the long-term embedded role of OST program participation in the context of Latina/o youths' pathways to college. I use the term "embedded role" because I believe that qualitative researchers cannot isolate the influences of OST program participation from the influences of family, school, and community. Rather, young people's OST experiences vary in important ways in relation to the experiences and supports available to them outside any single OST program. By looking at a small sample of Latina/o youth in community contexts—first in eighth grade and again in early adulthood—this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What was the embedded role of a high-quality OST program in the context of other institutions, organizations, and individuals that shape these Latina/o youths' transition to adulthood?
- For which of these Latina/o youth did OST programs play a more pivotal role?

Site and Sample

The Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) program began in the fall of 2000 through a partnership between the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (JGC) at Stanford University and a mid-sized San Francisco Bay Area city as a pilot project to assess the needs and strengths of local middle school youth. This program was selected for study based on its exemplary model of youth development, the proportion of Latina/o youth involved, and the depth of data available on participants (Conner & Strobel, 2007). Although the program continues, this study focuses on the first three cohorts of participants at one middle school site.

YELL seeks to instill positive development by encouraging youth to see themselves as valuable contributors to their community and as being capable of succeeding in a variety of settings. At the time of this study, the first semester of the program was dedicated to team building and teaching social science research methods. During the second semester, youth put their skills into action by choosing a current issue in their school or community, conducting research on the topic, and presenting results to relevant groups. Participants were paid a small stipend for participating. The program has changed over its years of operation in response to the needs of the youth, the school, and the surrounding community.

Each year administrators at the middle school and YELL staff members collaborated to select a cohort of about 15 youth to participate. Presentations were made to all eighth-grade classes, describing the project as an opportunity to "make the community a better place while learning new skills and having an employment opportunity" (Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003, p. 5). The application consisted of demographic information and two short-answer questions; about half of the applicants were selected for interviews. Only students

> What was the embedded role of a high-quality OST program in the context of other institutions, organizations, and individuals that shape these Latina/o youths' transition to adulthood?

with at least a C average were allowed to participate, as school officials requested (though one exception was made). A small committee of program staff selected participants based on the following criteria: enthusiasm for the goals of the project; ability to get along with others; and socioeconomic, neighborhood, ethnicity, academic, and gender diversity.

The selection of youth to participate in YELL was biased in many ways. First, only interested youth with free time after school chose to apply. Youth who were not interested in "making their community a better place" or who had other obligations after school (such as working, at home or for pay, or attending private lessons) would not have applied. Students with a grade average lower than C were not allowed to participate. These factors of motivation and availability may distinguish participating youth from their peers. In addition, fewer than 20 percent of applicants were ultimately selected to participate in YELL. Although program staff selected an intentionally diverse group of participants, this vetting process introduces an additional layer of selection bias.

During the entire calendar year of 2008, our research team attempted to contact and interview all youth from the first three cohorts of YELL participants, now five to seven years out of the program. Contact attempts were made first in English by a research assistant, then in English and Spanish by former participants. We began by contacting youth through the home and alternate phone numbers they provided as participants. We met with former program staff members to learn the current phone or email contact information for youth with whom they were still in touch. In addition, we searched the Internet using search engines and social networking sites. Finally, each time we interviewed a former participant, we asked if he or she knew the current contact information of any other youth from the program roster. Of the 47 youth in the first three cohorts of YELL, we were unable to locate half. Of the 23 youth that we located, each was contacted at least four times. Three former participants declined to be interviewed; eight agreed but were too busy during our 12-month research

period to schedule an interview. In the end, we interviewed 12 former YELL participants, or about half of the located sample.

The sample of interviewees was 75 percent female, 83 percent Mexican or Mexican American, and 17 percent white. Of the Mexican or Mexican-American youth, 80 percent participated in English as a Second Language programs for some portion of their elementary school education. Most of the interviewees attended one of the three local large public high schools; however, 17 percent attended small private day schools on full scholarships. At the time of our interviews, about 33 percent of the sample was attending community college part time, 17 percent was attending community college full time, 33 percent was attending a private university full time, and 17 percent was attending trade school full or part time. See Table 1 for the characteristics of the 12 youth.

Method

This research was conducted using notes from in-depth interviews conducted in eighth grade, together with interviews I conducted with former participants five to seven years later in young adulthood. Site-based JGC researchers conducted interviews with YELL participants during the fall and spring of each year of participation.[1] The process of data collection and analysis created opportunities for YELL directors and JGC researchers to discuss youths' experiences as well as programmatic philosophies and research methods. Thus the interview protocol changed each year in response to emerging trends and the curiosities of staff, students, and researchers. Although changes in the interview protocol limited our ability to make direct comparisons from year to year, the adaptations allowed the findings to be of direct use to the program staff and participating youth as well as responsive to community and national events.

The format of interviews conducted in young adulthood builds on the Life History Calendar (LHC) method (Freedman, Thorton, Camburn, Alwin, & Young-DeMarco, 1988), a technique for collecting accurate retrospective data. Generally, topic cues run down the left margin of the calendar while timing cues run across the

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Table 1

Category of Influence	Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	ESL	High School	Current Work	Current School	No. of Children	Career Goal
Transforma-tive	Maria	Female	Mexican	Y	Large Public	Human Relations FT	Community College PT	0	Unsure
Transforma-tive		Female	Mexican	Y	Large Public/ Community College	Afterschool Program PT	Community College FT	0	Researcher
Transforma-tive		Female	Mexican	Y	Large Public	Food Service FT	Community College PT	0	Unsure
Distinguish-able		Female	Mexican	N	Small Private	Community Organizing PT	Private University FT	0	Lawyer
Distinguish-able	Teresa	Female	Mexican	N	Large Public	Retail FT	Community College FT	0	Nurse
Distinguish-able		Male	Mexican	Y	Large Public/ Continuation	Retail FT	Trade School PT	1	Firefighter
Distinguish-able		Female	White	N	Large Public	None	Private University FT	0	Photographer
Auxiliary		Male	Mexican	Y	Small Private	Research PT	Private University FT	0	Doctor
Auxiliary		Female	Mexican	Y	Large Public	Public Relations PT	Community College PT	0	Unsure
Auxiliary		Male	White	N	Large Public	None	Trade School FT	0	Electrician
Auxiliary		Female	Mexican	Y	Large Public	Retail PT	Private College FT	0	Doctor
Auxiliary	Ana	Female	Mexican	Y	Large Public	Food Service FT	Community College PT	1	Unsure

top, creating a LHC matrix (Axinn, Pearce, & Ghimire, 1999). In this study, topic cues were school, home/family, and anything else besides home and school. The timing cues were before elementary school, elementary school, middle school, high school, and after high school. The LHC fits the structure of respondents' autobiographical memories by encouraging recall at both thematic and temporal levels (Belli, 1998). Since its inception, the LHC has been used primarily for large-scale quantitative studies; it has frequently been adapted for use with diverse age groups and populations (Axinn et al., 1999).

Using the LHC to capture the embedded role of OST participation offers a number of benefits. First, the LHC captures the process of becoming involved in and disengaging from activities, networks, and behaviors. Second, this method can uncover patterns of continuity and change in individual behavior over time. Finally, the life history method is grounded in social and historical context, a context that is especially important for understanding the lives of today's Latina/o youth in California.

Because my purpose was to generate rich qualitative data on a small number of individuals, I deviated from the traditional life history calendar. My pilot testing of structured LHC protocols with young adults of working class or poor family backgrounds failed to elicit in-depth responses. A less structured approach to the LHC enabled richer data collection. In this study, I maintained the traditional LHC matrix but began interviews with a large blank page, markers, and stickers. The interviewer and respondent then co-constructed the time cues—from birth to present day—horizontally across the page, and substantive cues—including school, home, and "anything not school and not home"—vertically. This variation on the LHC helped build rapport; allowed for in-depth narratives of the respondents' lives; and placed OST participation in the broad context of family, school, and community.

Degrees of Influence

YELL did not influence all participants to the same degree. Indeed, five to seven years following program completion, some participants were preparing to graduate from college, while others sat in jail. Although we heard from the youth that some of their peers were sent back to Mexico, worked full-time, joined gangs, or were behind bars, all of the youth located for young adulthood interviews were then living within an hour of their middle school and were enrolled in some kind of educational institution. All said they had benefitted from YELL. These youth illustrate a preliminary typology of the influences of high-quality OST programs. However, even high-quality OST programs do not positively influence all participants; the YELL participants who chose not to be interviewed as young adults or could not be located may have included some who were not positively influenced by the program.

In this sample, each participant's path to higher education was unique, including significant variation in the role YELL played, yet clear patterns emerged. Based on eighth-grade interviews and LHC data, I have constructed a typology of degrees of embedded influence:

- *Auxiliary* influence
- *Distinguishable* influence
- *Transformative* influence

In the next sections, I will first define each category of influence and then recount the experiences of one youth who typifies each category of embedded influence.

For which youth, in what contexts, are high-quality OST programs bound to have a relatively strong embedded influence? The weaker a young person's support system, the more potential an OST program has to play a transformative role. We cannot generalize based solely on ethnic and structural categories to discover which youth will benefit the most from such programs. All of the youth profiled below are Latinas.[2] All were raised in working class or poor homes in the same city. All attended the same middle school. All currently attend community college while holding down a full-time job. Only by peering into multiple contexts—school, home, community—over an extended period of time were we able to see the distinct differences among the roles YELL played for each student.

> When asked what was most influential in her elementary school life, Ana credited her bilingual teachers and her father.

Auxiliary Influence

Some youth currently attending college started along this path prior to joining YELL. These students possessed the ambition, support from home, and academic aptitude to attend college. Many had been active in high-quality OST activities from a young age. All were surrounded by adults who valued higher education and helped keep the students college-bound; most already possessed strong connections to the school community. Though YELL may have been a good experience, ultimately participation did not change these students' direction. If they had not participated, they would have likely had another enriching activity after school. YELL did not act as a primary support system, nor did it bring about personal transformation. When asked about the most influential forces in getting them to college, youth for whom YELL had an auxiliary influence often cited a parent or adult mentor and their own determination. Many said they always knew they would go to college.

Ana's experience exemplifies auxiliary OST program influence. Born in Mexico City, Ana immigrated to the United States at the end of first grade with her mother and sister. Ana's father had previously immigrated and established a home for the family. According to Ana, "It wasn't going to be possible for [my father] to leave us [in Mexico] while he was here working, and, plus he wanted us to come and go to school and have a better future, a better education for us." Ana spoke no English before moving to California. She described the transition as difficult, but remembered loving her new elementary school. She said she made "a lot of really nice friends," and enjoyed participating in the school's afterschool program. When asked what was most influential in her elementary school life, Ana credited her bilingual teachers and her father. She said:

> My dad was really strict with us…. He would come to the library, bring us books, and we would have to read a book, and then he would do a summary, plot and everything for us…. That was our homework for the weekend. I think it was a little frustrating for me, because I was really good in school…. [But] thanks to that we went to school, we went to college. My sister's still in school. I am still in school.

Ana said that the transition to middle school was scary but that she found it "easy to find friends" and "adapt." She participated in the school's afterschool program during sixth and seventh grades, relishing the time to complete her homework. During her free time, Ana reported, she would "always be at home"; she spoke of "having fun with all my family." Ana did not remember exactly when she participated in YELL, but she liked the program because she got to "help the community," "meet many people that were really great," and work on a project—though she had no recollection of the nature of the project. When asked what was influential during her middle school years, Ana cited her parents, "because they were the ones who were always pressuring me to do my homework, to do good in school, to be a good student."

At the end of Ana's eighth-grade year, her mother died. The death took a toll on the family. During high school, Ana said that her father was often working. As a sophomore, Ana got a part-time job. She remembered being busy: "I had my boyfriend. I had to go to work. I had to do homework. I had to cook. I had to clean the house." But Ana did not relent in her pursuit of college: "I had to think more seriously about what I wanted in my life and in my future." Although she did not participate in afterschool activities in high school, she was active in two lunchtime clubs, one for community service and the other a support group for Latinas. When asked what was most influential in her high school years, Ana credited her dad, her sister, and a close friend.

Although she still was not sure of her major at the time of our interview, Ana said she enjoys attending community college. She enrolled for one year while working full time; then she took a quarter off to give
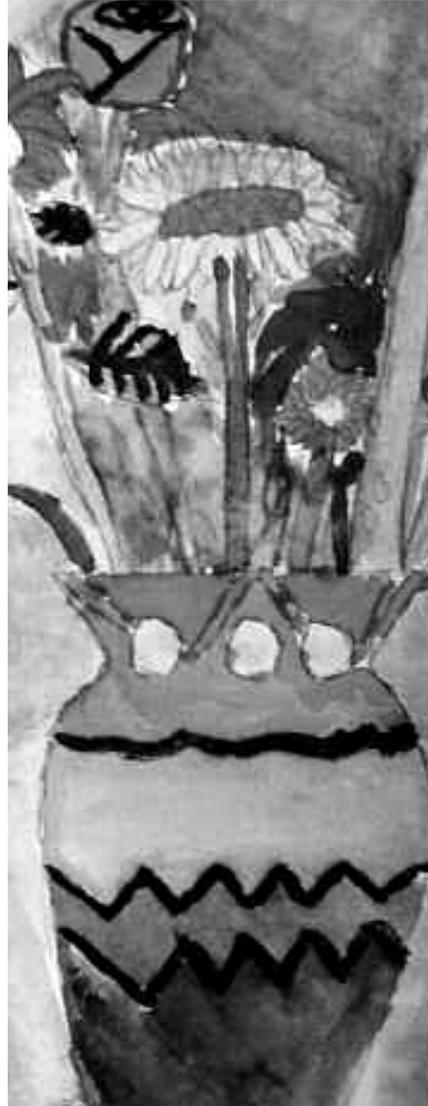
Five years after her time in YELL, Teresa returned constantly in her interview to the confidence she gained through participating.

birth to her son. Two months later, she returned to working days and going to school at night, leaving her son in the care of her aunt. Both Ana and the people who surround her share a strong commitment to her college education:

Like my dad said, "You know, now that you have the kid, if you want to continue on to school, take one class, two classes until you finish whatever you started." So, I want to do that. I *really* want to finish school or something that is going to help me for me and the kid.

While Ana recognized her father's impact on her choices, she also gave herself credit for persevering: "Sometimes you go to school because of your parents, but my dad is not here right now—he's in Mexico—and nobody's pressuring me to go to school. It's just me and I want to go to school."

For Ana, YELL had an auxiliary influence on her path to college. She remembered the program positively—even calling it the best "one of those programs" in which she took part. However, over the long run, her own dedication and aptitude, coupled with support from friends and family, are what carried her through school and on to higher education in spite of tragedy and complications.

Distinguishable Influence
The next group of YELL participants attributed some of their success to the OST program, even though they had started along the path to college before their YELL experience. Throughout their adolescence, these youth tended to display academic aptitude and a strong commitment to attending college. Though they said they had positive adult role models, they did not perceive themselves as having a tight circle of supports and sometimes felt isolated from their families or school community. YELL

engendered a sense of belonging that they did not feel elsewhere. In YELL, these young people generated strong relationships with adults, got connected to complementary organizations, and bonded with likeminded peers. More than simply another afterschool program, YELL was a significant force in helping these young people maintain their direction. When asked about the most influential forces propelling them to college, youth for whom YELL had a *distinguishable* influence cited YELL along with family and self.

Teresa was born and raised in a mobile home park in an industrial area. She characterized her elementary school as "poorer," but remembered having "a good experience there" as a shy and "nerdy" child. The school had "a lot of afterschool programs and stuff for kids," and Teresa said she "did all those afterschool programs." She particularly remembered that "all the people were really nice" but could not recall details of the programs. When asked what was most influential while she was in elementary school, Teresa cited school and home, saying, "I guess school was…the most influential, and my family. But school, I mean, I learned so much [in school], not only about regular school but just being with the people." Overall, Teresa felt successful and welcome both during and after school.

Middle school was different. While school work continued to come easily, Teresa found the social aspects of middle school extremely difficult. She remembered the kids being "annoying" and "mean," so much so that she would "just go [to school] as few days as possible." YELL stood out in Teresa's memory as one part of middle school where she felt that she belonged. "It was a good school, just, like, the people I didn't really get along with. But YELL was a good part." Teresa cited the people in YELL, particularly adult leaders, as the most pivotal aspect of its influence. "People are just so caring about you, and they always want you to succeed…. They just really cared about the kids and their future and everything." As someone who talked frequently about going to college—even as an eighth grader—Teresa appreciated the knowledge and support of YELL leaders.

Five years after her time in YELL, Teresa returned constantly in her interview to the confidence she gained through participating.

> I was still really shy…But, I mean, all this program stuff helped me in going through middle school and high school. It definitely changes you. So, I became more outgoing and everything…[YELL] helped me meet a lot of people… It brought me out of my shell.

Although the relationships she formed with peers and adults did not extend beyond her time in the program, the personal growth Teresa experienced had a lasting role in her life.

Teresa chose to attend a different high school from her middle school peers in order to have a fresh start. Again, academics came easily—and now, for the first time, the social aspects of school were less daunting. Outside of school, Teresa spent most of her time volunteering at the senior center, the public library, or the city's teen advisory board. She also acted as a counselor for the county's outdoor education program and as a mentor in YELL. Starting in her sophomore year, Teresa worked part time. When asked what was most influential in her high school years, Teresa cited popular adult leaders in her OST programs, teachers from elective classes at school, and her parents (even though she said they were "boring").

Immediately after graduating high school, Teresa moved into her own apartment and enrolled in community college to pursue a degree in nursing. She said she likes nursing because, as in many of her high school activities, "you get to help people." At the time of our interview, Teresa was halfway through the nursing program and was planning to transfer to a four-year university to complete her degree. She was working full-time and volunteering every week at the public library.

YELL had a *distinguishable* influence on Teresa's path to college. When asked what gave her the determination to attend college, Teresa credited herself, her parents, and YELL:

> I don't want to end up at a dead-end job. I want to do something with my life. So, it was, like, college time, definitely. And then, just my parents, they're like, "You know, you need to get an education," and everything…And YELL has definitely helped with school.

While her natural academic aptitude, attitudes toward college, and support from home placed Teresa on a college path before she joined YELL, participating made an impression on Teresa that was distinguishable from other experiences.

Transformative Influence
Other YELL participants were started along a path toward delinquency when they joined. These youth had no college motivation, records of delinquency, and emerging gang ties. This group of former participants

stands out because they changed significantly during and following their time in YELL. In YELL, these young people generated strong relationships with adults, got connected to complementary organizations, and bonded with likeminded peers. YELL qualitatively changed these youth and sparked a domino effect of beneficial supports and experiences in subsequent years. When asked about the most influential forces in getting them college-bound, youth for whom YELL had a *transformative* influence cited YELL emphatically.

Maria was one of those on whom YELL had a transformative influence. Maria attended preschool in Mexico before moving to the United States as a young child. Soon after arriving, her parents separated. Maria grew up with her single mother, moving to at least four different districts during elementary school and living on the edge of poverty with various groups of relatives. Bright but uninterested in academics, Maria had little ambition throughout elementary school.

Middle school was no better. According to Maria, "My sixth grade year I was a little troublemaker in school. I would always be in fights with other people—all through sixth and seventh grade. Girls, and guys too; I got in a fight with this guy; he pushed me and I slapped him across the face." With each passing year, Maria said, she crept closer to gang involvement and pregnancy. Her grades were poor, and she felt little connection to school. By the beginning of eighth grade she was on the verge of dropping out.

Maria joined YELL at the urging of the guidance counselor; she was the only exception to the minimum C average rule. Over the course of the year, her grades improved significantly. Maria credited YELL for her academic turnaround, citing the opportunity it gave her to think about the problems in her community and the role she could play in the solutions. "When I got in YELL, I started to think a little bit better about who I am and what I want…. Everything used to be all blank. I just acted…. I didn't even know what I was doing." She said that she vividly remembers, "the day when my science teacher said to the principal, 'I want to show you the star of my class.' And the principal just looked at me and he said, 'Oh wow!'" Maria's commitment to her education prompted her teachers and peers to begin to see her differently.

Joining YELL connected Maria with resources and relationships to point her in a new direction. As a high school student, Maria continued as a mentor in YELL. She went on to volunteer as a reading tutor, present workshops at national conferences on youth development, and co-found Latinas in Action, a support group for young Latinas. She credited YELL with providing, "a ladder of opportunities…. It is like…the trunk of the tree and all these other programs and opportunities are the branches." Looking back on the most influential factors during high school, Maria stated clearly, "If I didn't keep going in YELL, I would be a different person right now…. I have a lot of friends who are in jail, some of my friends are pregnant and they have babies, some are married already." As an eighth grader, Maria was on the path to just such outcomes.

By the time she graduated from high school, Maria had received a prestigious community leadership award and a college scholarship. At the time of her interview, she was a student at a nearby college. Participating in YELL had a *transformative* influence for Maria; while it may not have single-handedly changed her life, it began a domino effect of opportunities which shifted her path from gang involvement to college.

Influencing Factors

This preliminary typology of the role a high-quality OST program can play in the lives of Latina/o youth illustrates both the commonalities and wide diversity of participating youth. Programs like YELL have the potential to provide a safe and supportive environment, with opportunities for belonging and competence. The voluntary nature of participation helps engender a sense of autonomy. Skilled staff members can provide support, encouragement, and vital information along the path to college. Staff members with local knowledge can also refer youth to subsequent opportunities at the close of the program. For some youth, this combination of resources and opportunities alters their path in life. For others, it may have a distinguishable or auxiliary influence. Indeed, all interviewed youth benefitted from YELL to some degree.

Many of the ways that YELL benefited participants align with social capital and role identity theories of academic attainment among Latina/o adolescents. Although

> Although youth for whom the program was an auxiliary influence rarely cited specific aspects of the program that were memorable or influential, all youth for whom the program had a distinguishable or transformative influence mentioned staff members as an important component.

youth for whom the program was an auxiliary influence rarely cited specific aspects of the program that were memorable or influential, all youth for whom the program had a distinguishable or transformative influence mentioned staff members as an important component. YELL staff members provided emotional support, academic encouragement, and cultural capital regarding pathways to college—important contributions, given the literature claiming that academic success among Latina/os arises from the combined influences of loving parents and supportive non-parent adults (Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006) and that the biggest barriers to college-going include minimal adult supervision, misinformation, and poorly informed choices (Immerwahr, 2003; Zalaquett, 2006).

However, the young adults respondents said that the staff members who had the biggest influence were those who built and maintained strong relationships over time. The staff members' presence among youth was not sufficient to providing a distinguishable or transformative influence on youth; the staff member and student must take an active role. For example, this study includes a pair of sisters less than two years apart in age. One sister experienced a transformative influence and the other experienced an auxiliary influence. Surely the difference cannot easily be attributed to differences in home environment or socioeconomic status. In terms of social capital, the difference comes with the strength and duration of their relationships with staff members. The sister who experienced a transformative influence remained involved in the program as a mentor for about three years after she graduated from eighth grade. She also actively participated in other community organizations that had strong ties with YELL. Around the time of her high school graduation, she kept in contact with two former staff members through email, phone, and attendance at community events. Those staff members raised money for a scholarship fund to assist this sister with the costs of books, a computer, transportation, and college tuition. At the time of the follow-up interview, she was still in touch with those two staff members on a monthly basis. Meanwhile, the sister who experienced an auxiliary influence participated in the OST program for only one year and did not communicate with staff members after her transition to high school.

In addition, all youth for whom YELL had a transformative or distinguishable influence also attributed the influence to program activities that encouraged public speaking, attention to interpersonal dynamics, and opportunities for belonging. In keeping with role identity theory, the program helped these young people develop identities as both engaged students and confident peers. Many students claimed that YELL helped them find their voice, or find themselves, or feel that they mattered. This sense of self carried both into the school day and into their home lives. For example, students remembered being positively noticed by teachers for their involvement in YELL and for working harder in school. Students also remembered being positively noticed by their families for being active in their community. For example, Maria's mother, who did not complete elementary school, rarely took interest in her daughter's academics; however, when Maria had the opportunity to present to the city council, her mother was bursting with pride.

While we know that Latina/o youth frequently experience limited access to extracurricular programming (Flores-González, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999), few studies explore what role OST programs play for Latina/o youth. The results of this study indicate that Latina/o youth benefit to varying degrees from OST participation, and that the ways that Latina/o youth benefit align with multiple sociological theories predicting educational attainment. Participants who experienced a distinguishable or transformative influence built social capital through relationships with supportive and knowledgeable program staff. They also began to develop positive identities bridging their home and school lives together through skill building, community participation, and belonging. Although these results are not generalizable based on the limited sample size, this study provides a foundation for further research exploring OST activities as a beneficial setting for college-aspiring Latina/o youth.

Future Directions

Young people do not experience OST programs uniformly. Depending on the alignment of their personal characteristics; their other school, community, and home supports; and the resources and relationships available in the OST program, participation in an OST program may act as a stopover after school or as a life-changing opportunity. This study outlines a preliminary typology and, by examining the embedded influence of an OST program on Latina/o youth over time, paves the way for future longitudinal research on OST experiences. Specifically, future research can build on this study by further examining what factors predict varying degrees of influence, by exploring the distributions of influence within and

across programs, and by mapping connections among the programs in which youth engage over time.

First, further research is needed on what factors predict what kind of influence a student will experience in a given program. How much of the influence a program has over time can be attributed to alignment between the students' interests and the program's resources? How much of the influence can be attributed to the presence or lack of other opportunities and supports in the student's life? Finally, what role, if any, do race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status play? If alignment turns out to be an important factor, it would follow that each community should have a wide variety of programs. However, if programs fill a void for certain youth regardless of program content, access to any high-quality program would make a difference. As all interviewees in this study indicated that they originally became involved with YELL because they were interested in making their community a better place, this study provides exploratory evidence that program alignment with students' interests may be an important factor in generating participation, while the presence or lack of other support systems may ultimately determine the degree of influence a youth experiences.

In this sample, roughly one in four youth reported that YELL had a transformative influence across their adolescence. Future research should explore whether it is possible, or even desirable, for a single program to have a transformative influence on all participants. Since prolonged relationships with adult staff members were a shared experience among all of the youth who experienced transformative influence, what kind of resources and adult/youth ratios would need to be in place to facilitate such relationships? Further, all transformative-influence youth were well loved by family and friends but lacked social capital with regard to the school system and lacked support and incentive at home for developing appropriate "school kid" identities. What would it look like for youth who already have access to college-pathway social capital and identity support to experience transformative influence in an OST program? Further research could examine the distribution of embedded influences across a wide variety of programs. In addition, as our sample did not include youth who were negatively influenced by OST programs, further research could expand this preliminary typology beyond positive influence.

Third, participation begets participation. Many youth learned of subsequent opportunities for extracurricular participation from YELL-related contacts. For some youth, those subsequent experiences were more influential than YELL. Research shows that adolescents are drawn to programs that cater to their particular age cohort (Strobel, Kirshner, O'Donoghue, & McLaughlin, 2008). Therefore, as youth age, staff members can help youth sustain their personal and social development by referring youth into age-appropriate programs. However, in order for youth to progress through a community's ladder of opportunities, those opportunities must exist for every age cohort of youth, and staff members at each rung must be knowledgeable of and connected to programs that serve older youth. This pattern in our data, that participation begets participation, indicates the importance of research on the local social networks among OST staff members and on how such influence positive outcomes among youth over time.

Finally, this study shows that youth are influenced by OST programs long after participation has ended. A stronger focus in the OST field on longitudinal research may have much to teach us about how OST programs influence youth's trajectories from adolescence into adulthood.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

[1] While the majority of participants were active in YELL for only their eighth-grade year, three to five youth were selected each year to return to the program as paid mentors. Youth were interviewed during the fall and spring of every year, whether they were participants or employees. Thus the number of interviews conducted with each participant ranged from one to seven.

[2] Although all three individuals profiled are female, their experiences are representative of the young men and women in the sample.

defining our terms

Professional Development in Out-of-School Time

by Nancy Peter

Research in the out-of-school time (OST) field confirms a strong connection between professional development for staff and positive experiences and outcomes for youth (National Youth Development Learning Network [NYDLN], 2006). According to Heather Weiss (2005/2006), founder and director of the Harvard Family Research Project, "Professional development for those who work with children and youth is fraught with challenges and ripe with opportunity—specifically, the opportunity to increase staff quality, which experts agree is critical to positive experiences for children and youth" (p. 1). In recent years, the OST community has invested significant time and money into researching, creating, implementing, and evaluating professional development activities for OST staff.

These efforts, while important, have been hampered by irregular wording and inconsistent definitions. Staff use multiple terms to describe or provide a context for different forms of professional development. For example, many agencies use the terms *professional development* and *workshops* to mean the same thing, while others believe that workshops are one component of a larger professional development strategy. Some organizations distinguish *professional development,* which enriches the individual, from *staff development,* which enriches the program or agency; others use these terms interchangeably. Unfortunately,

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because there is no standard OST professional development glossary, we have no common reference point through which to synchronize our terminology.

Why Definitions Matter

Why is it problematic that one organization's *training series* is another's *professional development strategy?* What is the harm in using the terms *capacity building* and *quality improvement* interchangeably? In a relatively new field such as OST, shouldn't we expect a great deal of variation in our definitions and terminology?

It is precisely because OST is a rapidly evolving field that we should pay closer attention to our terms and communication. OST draws from multiple disciplines including classroom education, social work, daycare, and recreation, each with its own nomenclature. To communicate effectively among ourselves, we need to know that various professional development terms mean the same thing to various individuals or organizations. For example, my organization, the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC), was recently asked to evaluate a *technical assistance* strategy. Since our expertise is in evaluating workshops and conferences, we developed new instruments to monitor what we assumed would be less formal, more individualized interventions—only to learn that the "technical assistance" we would be evaluating consisted of a series of trainings.

Similarly, the OST field is working hard to establish our legitimacy with funders, legislatures, and the public (Afterschool Alliance, 2005). Being consistent in our terminology and message strengthens our collective credibility. I have been in meetings with grant makers and government staff who expressed confusion—and frustration—over the variety of overlapping terms emanating from our field. Anything we can do to lessen the interpretive burden on others, particularly stakeholders, benefits everyone.

One immediate way to promote effective communication is to preface all OST professional development conversations by introducing and defining our terms. For example, when conducting OST workshops, the OSTRC introduces a working definition of *professional development* so that all participants are speaking the same language. We have also found this strategy helpful in other OST situations: brainstorming about the term *intermedi-*

> I have been in meetings with grant makers and government staff who expressed confusion—and frustration—over the variety of overlapping terms emanating from our field.

ary at the beginning of a seminar on intermediaries, discussing multiple interpretations of *safety* when developing a vision statement that addresses community safety, and more. Since professional development terms and interpretations are inherently diverse, introductory definitions should include contextual disclaimers such as "For the purpose of this workshop…" or "According to our organization…."

A second, more substantive and challenging approach would be to agree on a set of common professional development terms and definitions. This will not be easy, as the field struggles with muddled terminology in many settings. For example, national surveys document extreme diversity in job titles that share similar job responsibilities, even within the same city (Buher-Kane & Peter, 2008; LeMenestrel & Dennehy, 2003). In one Philadelphia setting, a *youth worker* is an adult who works with youth; in another, it is a young person who works. Such diversity hinders efforts to establish credentials and career ladders in our emerging field. We have to continually remind ourselves of where we are and with whom we are conversing.

Yet the OST field is making linguistic progress. We have developed many sanctioned sets of national program standards (Breslin, 2003), have identified multiple youth worker competencies (NYDLN, 2003), and are working on a series of afterschool trainer guidelines (National Afterschool Association, 2008).

To jumpstart a conversation about OST professional development terminology, the following section presents a set of commonly used terms. For each, I begin by gathering definitions from other fields and then provide examples of how the OST community has adapted and refined these terms. Finally, I propose a series of OST professional development definitions. These are my own definitions, based on research in multiple fields; I intend them to serve as conversation starters, not proclamations.

Professional Development Definitions

With the exception of the first phrase, *professional development,* I present all definitions below in alphabetical order, not in order of importance. The terms I have chosen are derived from but do not represent a complete spectrum of professional development formats, programs, and opportunities. I have included the terms

capacity building and *quality improvement,* even though they do not relate exclusively to professional development, because they are often used in describing professional development strategies.

Professional Development

Definitions from related fields. *Professional development* is defined differently in different fields. In the business world, professional development is designed to help organizations enhance workforce effectiveness and productivity (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). The National Staff Development Council defines *professional development* for classroom teachers as "a comprehensive, substantiated and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement" (Mizell, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education (1998), teacher professional development should respect the leadership capacity of teachers, emphasize individual and organizational improvement, integrate current research in teaching and learning, provide content and strategies, promote continuous inquiry, and be evaluated on the basis of teacher and student impact. Across fields, professional development activities can include workshops, conferences, study groups, professional networks, task forces, and peer coaching (Porter, Garet, Desimone, & Birman, 2003) as well as program observations, journaling, curriculum development, and higher education (NSDC, 2004).

OST context. Weiss (2005/2006) defines *professional development* as "a full range of activities that have the common goal of increasing the knowledge and skills of staff members and volunteers" (p. 1). Boston's BEST Initiative, which offers youth development trainings and institutes, adds that "professional development refers to tools and activities that improve professional performance and the efficiency of a project, program, organization, or institution" (Youth Work Central, 1999). Professional development formats and settings include higher education activities; pre-service and in-service training; seminars and resource centers; credentialing systems and programs; local and national conferences; mentoring and coaching relationships; and informal resources such as newsletters, online discussion boards, and "brown bag" lunches (Bouffard & Little, 2004). Overall, OST professional development strives to enhance the individual, the program, and the field simultaneously.

Proposed definition. *Professional development* refers to a spectrum of activities, resources, and supports that help practitioners work more effectively with or on behalf of children and youth. Professional development formats include workshops, conferences, technical assistance, apprenticeships, peer mentoring, professional memberships, college coursework, and additional diverse offerings. Practitioners can be full-time staff, part-time staff, volunteers, teenagers, parents, or other non-staff members, provided that the professional development experience culminates in supporting OST youth participants. Because youth impact is always the ultimate goal, *staff development* is indistinguishable from *professional development.*

Capacity Building

Definitions from related fields. In her book *Investing in Capacity Building,* Blumenthal (2003) broadly defines *capacity building* as actions that improve nonprofit effectiveness. Capacity building in nonprofit agencies is comparable to organizational development, organizational effectiveness, and organizational performance management in for-profit organizations (McNamara, 1997). Capacity-building strategies involve human resource development, such as staff training, as well as organizational, structural, and administrative enhancement (Global Development Research Center, 1992).

OST context. *Capacity building* of programs and networks often refers to increasing both their depth, or quality, and their breadth in terms of number of sites, participants, contact hours, and activities. Specific capacity-building outcomes include increased numbers of high-impact programs, qualified staff, sound administrative processes, and sustainability strategies (American Youth Policy Forum, 2008). High-level organizational activities associated with achieving these outcomes are articulating a core vision, assigning coordination to a non-government entity, creating an advisory body of influential members, identifying dedicated funding for infrastructure development, adhering loosely rather than rigidly to the initial plan, and expanding gradually rather than rapidly (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008).

Proposed definition. On a systemic and organizational level, *capacity building* refers to increasing both the quality of programs and the scope of services. In the context of professional development, capacity building is indistinguishable from effective professional development: Both strive to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of staff, and, in turn, the positive impact on programs and participants.

Mentoring, Coaching

Definitions from related fields. The terms *mentoring* and *coaching* are frequently used interchangeably in the education community. Both describe enriching relationships between professionals (NYDLN, 2004). However, a distinction can be made. *Mentoring* can be defined as an ongoing relationship between a supportive and knowledgeable guide and a less experienced learner (Omatsu, 2004). In contrast, *coaching* often occurs between peers, pertains to solving specific problems, and takes place on an as-needed basis (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008). Mentoring is frequently associated with enriching the individual, while coaching generally focuses on enhancing a program (Center for Coaching and Mentoring, 2008). Lastly, mentoring relationships often develop and are maintained between individuals from different organizations, while coaching arrangements are usually site-based and site-specific.

OST context. Mentoring and coaching share many basic characteristics. According to Minnesota SMART, both involve individual relationships in work or education settings through which one person shares knowledge, skills, assistance, and/or support with another. Mentoring and coaching can be brief or continuous, address specific issues or general concerns, work in hierarchical or peer relationships, and be equally beneficial to both participants (Minnesota SMART, 2007). One difference is that mentors often follow individuals from position to position, whereas coaches generally concentrate on job-specific issues. An additional distinction is that mentors frequently offer a broad knowledge base, while coaches share expertise on a single or limited number of topics.

Proposed definition. In many circumstances, the terms *mentoring* and *coaching* are interchangeable. Both are used to describe professional relationships that enrich individuals as well as programs. Mentoring and coaching can be short-term or long-term, address specific issues or general concerns, take place within hierarchical or peer relationships, and involve staff from the same organization or different organizations. Effective mentoring and coaching typically benefit both participants equally.

Peer Networking Meetings, Professional Learning Communities

Definitions from related fields. *Peer networking meetings* and *professional learning communities* are forums in which groups of practitioners assist one another in their professional growth and competence. Prevalent among classroom teachers and administrators, professional learning communities can include individuals from one or more programs or agencies, involve scheduled meetings or informal get-togethers, address specific topics or multiple interests, and involve virtual Internet communication as well as face-to-face relationships (Murphy, 1997). Leiberman (1996) suggests that peer networking and professional learning communities provide opportunities for teachers to develop and reflect on their work and discuss their ideas, gain expertise not available in their schools, participate in a culture of ongoing inquiry, observe other professionals involved in intensive self-renewal and school change, and expand their understanding of policy and practice.

OST context. The After-School Institute (2008) defines its monthly peer networking meetings as "a forum to discuss, evaluate, plan, update, and conduct resource sharing, which serves as the primary catalyst for all other [professional development] activities." The OSTRC hosts monthly peer networking meetings that provide opportunities for staff to share resources and develop new professional relationships; participants use these experiences to enhance their programs and thus improve student outcomes. Peer networking meetings

(PNMs) can target staff from one organization or many, address direct-service and/or administrative staff, and be voluntary or mandatory. They may provide credits toward state- or city-mandated training. PNMs differ from formal workshops in that they do not use lecture as a primary activity; they do include ample opportunities for staff networking and feature peers, rather than external authorities, as panelists or presenters.

Proposed definition. *Peer networking meetings* are venues in which staff are encouraged to meet and get to know one another; share interests, expertise, and resources; and engage in collective problem solving. Unlike traditional workshops or trainings, PNMs use dialogue as the primary activity, include ample time for networking, and feature peers rather than experts as panelists or presenters. PNMs can involve staff from one organization or many. Participants may have comparable or diverse job responsibilities, come from similar or dissimilar programs, and represent specific or broad geographic areas. As with all professional development activities, PNMs strive to enrich staff as a means of enhancing programs and participants.

Quality Improvement

Definitions from related fields. In the nonprofit sector, the term *quality improvement* refers to many things: enhancing the customer or client experience, enriching organizational or programmatic infrastructure, cultivating staff growth and competence, and increasing the inherent value of services and resources. All quality improvement efforts require leaders to assess, organize, and encourage improvement, building on a foundation of staff trust. Strategies must begin with administrative and staff support, be broken down into manageable components, and be introduced in a climate in which people willing and able to implement change (Berman, 1998) .

OST context. *Quality improvement* means maximizing the number of promising practices in an OST program or agency (Rand Corporation, 2005). Promising practices are those that have been tangibly linked to an increased likelihood of student achievement (Peter, 2002). Such practices can be divided into structural features, such as program administration, and process fea-

tures, such as adult-youth relationships (Little, 2007). Quality improvement strategies include professional development activities such as workshops, technical assistance, and coaching. They may also involve other types of interventions, including direct funding, volunteer recruitment, and facility improvements (Granger, 2007). Continuous quality improvement systems help agencies monitor and enhance their own programs over extended periods of time (Weisburd & McLaughlin, 2004).

> As it relates to professional development, *quality improvement* refers to programmatic improvements that are the direct result of effective professional development.

Proposed definition. *Quality improvement,* in its broadest sense, includes all interventions that enhance the success of a program. These interventions may include staff training, physical upgrades, and financial support. As it relates to professional development, *quality improvement* refers to programmatic improvements that are the direct result of effective professional development.

Technical Assistance

Definitions from related fields. Minnesota SMART (2007) defines *technical assistance* (TA) as a relationship between an expert and a client in which the expert provides the client with customized assistance regarding a specific programmatic issue. TA can help staff define problems, analyze problems, and develop practical and effective responses (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2007). While agencies often combine the terms *training* and *technical assistance* into a single heading or service, trainings are usually more formal and generalized while technical assistance is less structured and more situation-specific.

OST context. *Technical assistance* is broadly defined and often used interchangeably with the terms *consultation* (National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2008), *customization* (Center for Afterschool Education, 2008), *intensive institution-specific assistance* (The After-School Institute, 2008), *agency mentoring* (Partnership for After School Education, 2008),and *service-on-demand* (National Center for Quality Afterschool at the Southwest Educational Developmental Laboratory, 2008). Fletcher (2004) describes OST technical assistance as "ensuring accountability, guaranteeing compliance with requirements, and supporting programs in specific ways

by answering questions and providing information and advice" (p. 16). In the OST field, TA differs from trainings and workshops in that it frequently takes place at the program site; often involves staff from single rather than multiple organizations; may be less formal and more conversational than a training session; focuses on an issue or issues of specific interest to the staff, program, or agency; may be initiated by the client (insider) or the expert (outsider); and may extend beyond a predetermined duration.

Proposed definition. *Technical assistance* refers to customized help and support that addresses specific issues or needs. External experts may provide TA to individual staff members, multiple staff members, entire programs, or entire organizations. While TA is often implemented on-site with individuals from a single organization, it can also be offered off-site for representatives from multiple programs or agencies. TA can be initiated by recipients, program monitors, administrative personnel, or funding agencies.

Workshops, Trainings

Definitions from related fields. The terms *workshops* and *trainings* are often used interchangeably. According to Merriam-Webster (2008), a *workshop* is usually a brief educational program for a small group of people that focuses on techniques and skills in a particular field. Broad and Newstrom (1992) define *trainings* as "instructional experiences provided primarily by employers for employees, designed to develop new skills and knowledge that are expected to be applied immediately upon arrival or return to the job" (p. 5). In general, workshops are expected to yield long-term benefits while trainings address specific situations and skill-sets. Workshops can also be a component of a training strategy, while trainings are rarely embedded in workshops.

OST context. Many organizations use the term *training* to describe a broad range of professional development activities. *Workshops* are more likely to present general knowledge—for instance, "Introduction to Youth Development"—while *trainings* generally offer skill development in areas such as CPR, grant-writing, or implementing a specific curriculum. However, most organizations use the two terms to mean essentially the same thing: formal venues in which OST staff learn to work with rich curriculum, forge supportive relationships with youth, and partner with communities to achieve optimal results (The After School Corporation,

2008). Workshops and trainings generally last from one to three hours, are implemented by one or more facilitators, can be held on-site or off-site, can accommodate staff from one or more programs, can be single-session or multi-session, can be offered alone or as part of a larger conference or symposium, and can cover a wide range of content and skills (Partnership for After School Education, 1999).

Proposed definition. Generally speaking, *workshop* and *training* are synonymous terms that describe formal sessions in which staff learn content and skills that are immediately useful or broadly applicable. Workshops and trainings can be facilitated by one or more presenters, held on-site or off-site, include staff from one or more programs, be single-session or multi-session, and cover a broad range of topics. The overarching goal of workshops and trainings is to improve program quality through staff development.

Toward Consistent Terminology

As with many evolving fields, the out-of-school-time profession struggles with terminology and consistency. Although many agree that professional development is a critical element of program quality and student impact, few concur on its precise definitions or components. By exploring and defining seven OST professional development terms, I hope to ignite a conversation about professional language, consistent terminology, and productive communication. This conversation can only enrich the field as it continues to design and implement professional development activities, collect information on effective interventions, and convey its resources and findings to other professions.

I have proposed broad and inclusive definitions rather than specific and exclusive ones. Similarly, I have combined terms, such as *workshops* and *trainings*, when the distinctions between the two are inexact, fluid, or debated. I included the terms *capacity building* and *quality improvement* because they are frequently used to describe professional development activities or outcomes. However, since these terms pertain more to programs and systems than to professional development, I would not generally include them in a conversation specifically about professional development.

This article has not covered many additional professional development formats that are less familiar but equally creative and effective. These venues include administrative and frontline observations and apprenticeships, university coursework and degrees, multi-year

career lattices, youth worker certification programs, and OST professional development standards (NYDLN, 2006).

While vastly different in format and delivery, all types of OST professional development should be designed for and culminate in enhancing student outcomes and achievement. Thus, it is misleading to distinguish professional development that influences the individual from that which affects programs or program participants, particularly in this field where staff frequently change positions and move from one organization to another. Regardless of how it is initiated or implemented, quality professional development should enrich the staff person as a means toward enriching the students.

The terms defined in this paper are clearly complex and open to interpretation. In an immediate effort to enhance communication, organizations should use professional development terms consistently in their literature and outreach materials, defining those terms whenever possible. The ultimate goal of this paper is to begin a conversation in which a national collaborative of OST organizations can agree on a common set of professional development definitions.

Acknowledgements

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rowing and growing

Afterschool Matters had the opportunity to talk with Kennise Farrington, a September 2009 senior at John Bowne High School[1] in Queens, New York, who spends part of her out-of-school time rowing in Meadow Lake, Queens.

Afterschool Matters (ASM): Tell me about yourself and how you became involved in Row New York.

Kennise: I'll be turning 17 in August. I'm going to be a senior next year, and I just recently tried out for the team in September 2008. I live at home with my grandmother. The coaches come to schools around New York City to recruit. I had a free period on the day the coaches were at my school, and a friend told me about it, so I just went along with her. I told her there was no way I was going on a rowing team. I had no idea what it was about, but I decided to accompany her. I was used to conventional sports like basketball, soccer, etc., and I never really thought about rowing. Who rows? You put an oar in the water and you just simply row. After doing it myself I realize how tiring it is and how much you have to put into it.

ASM: What is your day like when you have rowing practice?

Kennise: Well, during the school year, I get out of school at 2:04 p.m. and practice starts around 4:30 p.m. I'll go to the library with my friend or grab something to eat and then head over to the boat house because it's relatively close to my school. And

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ROW NEW YORK is a non-profit organization that provides New York City girls, grades 7–12, with intensive rowing experience as well as academic support. Row New York fields a competitive high school team, a learn-to-row afterschool program, a middle school program, and summer camps. The girls practice on Meadow Lake at Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Flushing, New York.

The mission of Row New York is to motivate, encourage, and empower girls from all across the city to excel in all aspects of life through physical and mental support and training. Row New York was founded in 2002 with one boat and eight girls. It has since expanded to provide over 300 girls a year with a unique opportunity to pursue success and commitment through teamwork. Row New York partners with the YMCA of Greater NY, the NYC Departments of Education and Parks & Recreation, the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, and the Office of the Queens Borough President.[2]

then once we get to practice we're in high gear. It's pretty fun....We get right out on the boats and the coaches tell us what we need to work on. Sometimes we get home a little late on race days or when preparing for a race.

ASM: How are you able to manage such a full schedule of school work, home responsibilities, and late afternoon practices?
Kennise: I quickly adjusted to doing my homework efficiently when I got home. On Mondays there's no practice, and we have an academics day. We go to the Row New York office after school where there are tutors and we can get any type of assistance needed for school subjects. That's one of the greatest things about the program, that it focuses on the student-athlete.

ASM: What's it like being in the shell?
Kennise: Being in the shell you realize how much of a strenuous sport rowing is. It's really intense. You use muscles you never realized you had. It's arm and leg strokes and a real opening of the body. It takes a lot of focus because one thing could ruin the whole rhythm of the boat, and cause you to lose a race. So it's physical strength and mental strength. When we first started practice, the assistant coach had us learn

names before we ever got in the boat. It showed us it wasn't always about winning; it was also about getting to know each other.

ASM: What kind of relationships do you have with the other rowers and coaches?
Kennise: I have met some of the greatest people. The bond of sisterhood I have is something that could never be replaced. The staff are incredible. I think I have a great bond with them because they see how much I want it, and they put it a great amount of time in trying to make me a better rower.

ASM: How does your family react to you being a rower?
Kennise: They find it pretty interesting because they don't know any rowers other than me. It's intriguing to them because they have never had a family member who rowed before. I'd love to row in college.

ASM: What's been one of your best experiences in rowing so far?
Kennise: I'd have to say it was on Mercer Lake in Princeton, NJ. It was my very first race on the water, so I was pretty nervous. I didn't want to have too high hopes. But my boat had been working really hard. The coaches told us that they didn't usually take a team to that race because it's difficult, and they didn't want our hopes to drown out in the beginning of our racing careers. We went thinking we'd just make the best of it, and we won gold. I'll never forget that day.

ASM: There are many ways that older youth can choose to spend their out-of-school time. What makes the choice of Row New York special for you? What keeps you involved?
Kennise: I have to say one of the things I like about rowing is that it's a clear example that hard work does bear prizes. At first I didn't know what to expect, but after hard training, long practices in the boat—whether we're in cold or hot weather—in the end we accomplished something. That's what makes me really happy, just knowing that I am not wasting my time. It makes me want to strive harder to be better. School comes first, but rowing has changed my whole outlook on things.

[1] John Bowne was the grandfather of Robert Bowne, for whom the Robert Bowne Foundation was named.

[2] This information provided by Row New York, www.rownewyork.org.

Afterschool Matters

Call for Papers
Fall 2010 Issue

Afterschool Matters, a national, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness in the field of afterschool education, is seeking material for the Fall 2010 issue. Published by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time with support from the Robert Bowne Foundation, the journal serves those involved in developing and running programs for youth during the out-of-school hours, in addition to those engaged in research and in shaping youth development policy.

Afterschool Matters seeks scholarly work, from a variety of disciplines, which can be applied to or is based on the afterschool arena. The journal also welcomes submissions that explore practical ideas for working with young people during the out-of-school hours. Articles should connect to current theory and practice in the field by relating to previously published research; a range of academic perspectives will be considered. We also welcome personal or inspirational narratives and essays, review essays, artwork, and photographs.

Any topic related to the theory and practice of out-of-school-time programming will be considered for the Fall 2010 issue. We invite you to discuss possible topics in advance with us. Suggested topics include:

- Descriptions and analyses of community-based youth organizations as institutions that support youth development through civic engagement, social and emotional development, arts development, academic achievement, or other means
- Descriptions and analyses of programs that collaborate with a range of community institutions, such as faith-based organizations or businesses
- Exploration of employment-related topics, including, for example, youth organizations as spaces for training and employment, youth as workers, community economic development, and youth programs

Submission guidelines
- Deadline is January 17, 2010, for the Fall 2010 issue of *Afterschool Matters*.
- Submissions should be double-spaced in 12-point font, including quotations and references, and submitted electronically or on a disk in Microsoft Word or Rich Text format.
- Submissions should not exceed 5,000 words.
- Include a cover sheet with the manuscript title, authors' names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.
- The names of the authors should not appear on the text, as submissions are reviewed anonymously by peers.
- Follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Edition, for reference style guidelines. Present important information in the text and do not use extensive footnotes or endnotes.

Inquiries about possible articles or topics are welcome.
To inquire or to submit articles, contact:

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