HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

THE EVALUATION EXCHANGE:

Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services

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From the Director's Desk

Heather B. Weiss
Director, HFRP

The International Youth Foundation points out that by the year 2000, roughly one-half of the world's population will be under the age of 25. In the United States, approximately one-quarter of the population is expected to be under 18 by 2000. These statistics point to the urgency of supporting positive youth development while also addressing the growing number of challenges facing young people today.

We have devoted this issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* to the evaluation of youth programs. In our Theory and Practice section, Dale Blyth of the Center for 4-H Youth Development and Professor at the University of Minnesota Extension Service, offers his reflections on the issues related to evaluating strength-based approaches to youth development. In our Promising Practices section, we build on a theme that we have presented in past issues — youth participation in evaluation. Kristen Zimmerman and Nancy Erbstein of Community LORE write about their approach, Youth Empowerment Evaluation. Revery Barnes and Kaira Espinoza of Rising Youth for Social Equity write about their experience using youth empowerment evaluation in an evaluation of a juvenile justice program. In our Questions and Answers section, we speak with Karen Pittman of the International Youth Foundation about evaluating youth development programs and about lessons learned from the international community. In our Evaluations to Watch section, Stacy Meade of the Michigan Public Health Institute discusses the use of an empowerment evaluation approach to increase local capacity for evaluation. Elena Lopez and I discuss the results of a recent study we conducted on foundation grantmaking for children and youth in our Spotlight section. Our New and Noteworthy and Electronic Mailbox sections identify useful print and electronic sources related to evaluation of youth programs. Finally, our Beyond Basic Training section highlights some forthcoming evaluation conferences. These articles bring together a variety of perspectives and help us to move ahead in thinking about how to improve results for children and youth. We would like to hear from readers about their work in this area for future issues of this newsletter.

In closing, I would like to thank all who completed our reader survey. We are now compiling the results and will share these in our next issue. Please continue to share your suggestions and comments with us through our e-mail (hfrp_gse@harvard.edu) or our Web site (http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp). Thank you. ✦

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IN THIS ISSUE:

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Reflections on Evaluating Strength-Based Approaches to Youth Development

In recent years there has been an increasing call to use strength- rather than deficit-based approaches to many issues — but especially those around youth and community development. In part, these reflect efforts to focus work on developing that which is desired rather than preventing or treating that which is undesired — the deficit. Such approaches have great appeal, especially for the audience or client, because they do not emphasize what is wrong but what is helpful and can be built. How do the differences in these two approaches impact the ways in which one does evaluation?

When I was the Director of Research and Evaluation at Search Institute, known for creating the 40 developmental assets that youth need to succeed and the Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth Initiative, my colleagues and I grappled with this question regularly. There are three key aspects to this question: the impact of “moving upstream” in the causal flow, the nature of the populations evaluated, and the perceptions of funders and policymakers.

Impact of Moving Upstream

In large part, strength-based approaches seek to use what we know about the factors that predict deficits (both protective factors and risk factors), often combined with other desirable characteristics of healthy development, to create outcomes that are earlier in the causal flow than the deficit. (e.g., establishing that a caring relationship between youth and adult exists, increasing the constructive use of time.) Such approaches are based on solid research, but they switch, in fundamental ways, the dependent (outcome) variable from the single deficit of concern to the multiple strengths, or assets, that are needed for youth to succeed. For example, they switch from just the level of drug use to the number and nature of positive factors operating in the youth’s life — such as the total number of developmental assets. Furthermore, most strength-based approaches look for assets that have an impact on multiple deficits (e.g., caring connections to positive adults or peers) and which, when combined, have cumulative effects (i.e., the more assets that are built, the greater the likelihood of thriving and reduced risk behaviors). There are three major implications for evaluation of moving upstream in the causal flow.

First, asset approaches recognize that most programs are not, by themselves (given low intensity and a limited time period), going to dramatically alter deficit outcomes. Instead they focus on creating the assets that should, based on theory and logic, reduce those longer-range outcomes. Like positive youth developments, deficits are, to paraphrase Karen Pittman, the result of the accumulation of the everyday people, places, and possibilities that youth experience. For the evaluator, this means that asset outcomes are often closer to interventions and more appropriate for many programs — a desirable feature. However, it also means that there is a dramatic shift from a singular, highly valued, often behavioral outcome to multiple, less recognized variables — variables that by themselves may not be very important to stakeholders.Second, while the measurement of deficits is not simple, they are often widely understood concepts with clear meaning and value. Assets are less well understood, less often measured carefully, and frequently confused with program outputs as opposed to outcomes. For example, youth who are engaged in constructive time use and play meaningful roles can be said to possess an important asset. Are programs that simply count their participation counting an output or the asset in all its richness? Furthermore, since it is the accumulation of assets, rather than particular assets, that has the greatest developmental value (as well as prevention value), evaluators need to create a mathematics of assets that captures this fact — often a difficult task.

> We know relatively little about multiple combinations and interactions among assets, but it is such factors that may lead to the effective long-term development or prevention of more commonly understood deficit or thriving outcomes.

Third, moving upstream in the causal flow means that one never knows if the ultimate goal was reached since the absence of something is harder to document than its presence. This dilemma has concerned prevention research for years and is not very different in asset evaluations except that one focuses on measuring the assets in and of themselves. If stakeholders’ only concerns are deficits that cost them funds or specific positive behaviors such as school achievement, the linkage of assets to these behaviors must be strong and clear — and sometimes empirical. In most youth development models, the linkage is strong but neither clear nor singular, as noted above.

Impact of Who Is Evaluated

Most asset- or strength-based approaches tend to define their target audiences much more broadly and holistically than deficit-based ones. For example, all youth need assets, not just those at risk.

While asset proponents believe that assets can and do make a difference in the lives of those at risk, these proponents are less likely to encourage programs that focus just on such youth. This means that evaluators, particularly of community-based initiatives, are often put in the position of evaluating not just at-risk youth but all program youth, or even all youth in a community. Demonstrating such impacts, let alone actually having such impact, is quite hard but can be a necessary component of some strength-based approaches. For example, using an asset-based approach to the development of all youth in a community makes sense since youth in a community affect one another's development. Evaluators should, when feasible, demonstrate the power of additional assets for different groups.

Another factor is that the number of assets needed to make a significant impact on longer-term outcomes may be differentially higher or lower for some youth. That is, since it is the cumulative number of assets and the health of the developmental contexts that matter in determining long-term outcomes, youth who live in higher risk environments may not be equally protected by the same level of assets as youth who live in a healthier environment. In contrast, it may also be the case that youth who experience a relative lack of assets may be greatly impacted by the addition of any new strengths. We know relatively little about these multiple combinations and interactions among assets, but it is just such factors that may lead to the effective long-term development or prevention of more commonly understood deficit or thriving outcomes. This type of combination effect complicates the work of an evaluator significantly. It also, however, better reflects the reality of development.

Impact of Stakeholder Perceptions

One of the main difficulties evaluators may have in evaluating asset-based approaches is getting stakeholders to agree that more assets, or the presence of particular assets, is a justifiable end in and of itself. Especially where public funds or scarce charitable funds are involved, stakeholders often want to know that programs impact the outcomes that matter most. Since assets are not magic pills that, once built, absolutely affect given deficits or thriving behaviors, it is important but difficult to build clear, empirical linkages between assets and deficits. A potential danger, which evaluators ought to screen for in evaluating strength-based efforts, is that different people hold incompatible views of the program — some strength based, some deficit based, and some a mix of both. The change from known evils to strengths not commonly agreed upon can make evaluation findings, even when positive, less convincing to some. Programs may have a harder time justifying strengths as ends in and of themselves. For example, is a youth better off if he has numerous strengths but still commits a crime or uses drugs? For many leaders, for whom strengths or assets were an integral part of their developmental contexts and everyday lives, the need to use public dollars to build them, or even talk about them may seem unjustified. This separation of costs and investments is critical to evaluating strength-based approaches.

In conclusion, there is much to recommend a variety of the strength- or asset-based approaches that are being used increasingly in community and youth development efforts. Evaluating these approaches requires understanding the approaches and the support they have from previous empirical work, building a chain of logic between what is built and what stakeholders value, and moving to a more complex, cumulative, and often more probabilistic model of causality. I, for one, believe that these difficulties are worth the changes in attitude, energy, involvement, and enhanced contextual reality that they bring with them. Finally, because such approaches are newer, they are less likely to meet a criterion of "proven" effectiveness. Those who use such generally sound criteria must be cautious that they do not throw out promising strength-based approaches that have simply not yet had the time to show they can work effectively. ✦

Dale A. Blyth
Director, Center for 4-H Youth Development and
Professor, University of Minnesota Extension Service

Youth Empowerment Evaluation

Democratic societies depend on the representation and participation of their members. Yet few organizations truly include the voices of stakeholders — particularly those of youth — in decision making and evaluation. The goals of Youth Empowerment Evaluation (YEE) are to increase youth voice in policies, programs, and organizations intended to serve them, and to enhance the ability of youth-serving organizations to effectively address and engage young people.

For nine years, Community LORE has promoted and supported youth participation in research, evaluation, and planning. Through our YEE initiative, we work as coaches, facilitators, and trainers (rather than evaluators) to develop the capacity of youth *and* adults to conduct youth-led evaluations. Young people gain the experience, skills, and concepts necessary to evaluate youth-serving organizations and to design organizational feedback loops that nurture learning, planning, and change. Adults learn to work in partnership with youth.

We work on four levels:

- training youth within organizations to design and conduct evaluations;
- developing curriculum for adult facilitators and youth leaders on planning and facilitating youth evaluation processes;
- coaching organization leaders and adult evaluators on working with youth as full partners and integrating youth leadership and evaluation into organizational structures and cultures;
- facilitating networking between organizations undertaking YEE.

Two recent Community LORE projects include the Jamestown Community Center evaluation and the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Project (JJE; see next article). The Jamestown project engaged participants in the Center's strategic planning process. We trained middle school aged youth to interview program participants and non-participants regarding their perceptions of the Center and their future program needs. For the JJE Project, Community LORE trained 12 youth to assess the impact of reforms on San Francisco's juvenile justice system. We collaborated with Rising Youth for Social Equity, Delancy Street Foundation, Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, and the Center for the Study of Social Change (University of California, Berkeley).

The following were critical to engaging and supporting youth evaluators:

- ***Collaboration.*** We planned the projects with host organizations in order to adapt the process to the context;
- ***Mentoring.*** Adults co-facilitated projects with youth staff to build their capacity to organize evaluation processes;
- ***Youth Development Process.*** We designed the evaluations as educational processes by using a series of fun, skill-building activities;
- ***Intensive Skill and Team Building.*** We organized retreats to build important skills and a strong team;
- ***Compensation.*** We paid youth for their work;
- ***Institutional Accountability.*** We worked with adults to help them incorporate and respond to the findings of youth evaluators.

YEE is a powerful process. Following are changes that these organizations initiated as a result of youth evaluations:

- ***Innovative new programs.*** Based on youth evaluator findings, Jamestown expanded its programming to serve middle school youth with arts, community organizing, and educational activities;
- ***Restructuring programs to better serve and engage youth.*** Based on youth evaluator feedback, Delancey Street Foundation restructured its assessment and referral center for youth who have been arrested;
- ***Increased youth voice in programs and policy.*** The evaluation team's decision to survey non-participating youth enabled Jamestown to reach a broader youth constituency. The JJE Project enabled youth to evaluate and design alternatives to incarceration. This will serve as a model for similar programs nationwide;
- ***Systematic transformation.*** Youth now participate in all program development at Jamestown. This commitment is backed up with substantial training and support.

YEE promotes the systemic transformation of youth service organizations into institutions which value and fully utilize youth leadership and which address the genuine needs of youth, their families, and the broader community.

Community LORE's YEE initiative develops the capacity of youth-serving organizations to engage youth in evaluation through coaching, curricula, training, and network development. ✦

Kristen Zimmerman
Co-Director

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Co-Director
Community LORE

For more information, contact: Community LORE, 2017 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94110. Tel: (415) 621-1402. comlore@igc.org. *Community LORE is supported by the S.H. Cowell Foundation, the Grousebeck Family Fund, the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and the San Francisco Foundation. Rising Youth for Social Equity and the JJE Project are supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Luke B. Hancock Foundation.*

The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Project

In 1997, Delancy Street Foundation developed a comprehensive action plan to reform San Francisco's juvenile justice system. In response, Rising Youth for Social Equity (RYSE), a youth-run organization, wrote a policy recommendation advocating for youth participation in developing and evaluting the plan's programs. RYSE staff served as the youth evaluation team on this project.

One weakness of many programs designed for young people is that youth themselves are rarely involved in project creation and implementation. While projects often use the language of partnership, collaboration, and ownership, such rhetoric often masks unequal power relationships. Participation by young people is generally limited to single events, after which they become the subjects of interventions planned, implemented, and evaluated by others. Adults, particularly those working within institutions such as schools and law enforcement, are often unaware of the ways in which power shapes their relationships with young people. In contrast, young people are often acutely aware of their own powerlessness.

The goal of our project was to include youth voice in the restructuring of San Francisco's juvenile justice system. We saw this as an opportunity for adults to learn what youth thought about the issues in our communities and lives. We knew we had valuable information to share, and this was our chance to be taken seriously.

We went through a one-year process to design and conduct our evaluation. First, we had to gather youth to form the Youth Evaluation Team. Twelve youth evaluators were selected by a youth-led hiring committee to carry out these important tasks. Those of us chosen to be evaluators went through training, discussions, and meetings with supportive adult mentors to learn the necessary skills to organize our project. Creating the survey, testing it, and collecting data were probably the most time consuming tasks. We created a database, and then professors at the University of California at Berkeley transferred our data into statistical software (SPSS). We then analyzed the results, researched background information, and put together our report.

Our final step will be to present this information to the Delancy Street Foundation. We will also distribute our report to people interested in making this society more youth friendly. Ultimately, we will let policymakers know what youth are concerned about so they will make more informed decisions that truly fulfill our needs. ✦

Revery Barnes
Director

Kaira Espinoza
Community Building Director
Rising Youth for Social Equity

RESOURCES

Publication:
Hart, Roger. (1997). *Children's participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*. New York: Earthscan.

Organizations:
Center for Young Women's Development
965 Mission Street, Suite 450
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 487-8662
The Center for Young Women's Development is an organization by and for young women involved in the street economy. The Center uses evaluation as an internal tool and as a tool for monitoring services for young women in San Francisco.

Center for Youth Development
Youth Mapping Project
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: (202) 884-8000
The Center for Youth Development provides training and facilitation in community mapping.

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
Youth Making a Change (YMAC)
459 Vienna Street
San Francisco, CA 94112
Tel: (415) 239-0161
The Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth is a youth advocacy organization that uses evaluation as an advocacy tool for youth issues in San Francisco.

Community LORE
2017 Mission Street, Suite 302
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 621-1402
Community LORE provides Youth Empowerment Evaluation curricula, training, and coaching to youth-serving organizations and schools. It has published a Youth Empowerment Evaluation curriculum guide for youth leaders and adult educators. It also publishes a newsletter with articles, activities, and resources.

Community Network for Youth Development
657 Mission Street, Suite 410
San Francisco, CA 94105
Tel: (415) 495-0622
This organization provides training, coaching, and network development around youth development.

Girls Best Friend Foundation
900 North Franklin, Suite 608
Chicago, IL 60610
Tel: (312) 266-2842
Girls Best Friend Foundation publishes "Mapping a Path to Evaluation," an evaluation guide for staff in organizations that work with girls.

Rising Youth for Social Equity
2068 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 863-1100
Rising Youth for Social Equity is a youth-run organization that provides training in youth leadership, popular education, and youth involvement in reforming juvenile justice systems.

St. John's Educational Thresholds Center
3040 - 16th Street
San Francisco, CA 94013
Tel: (415) 864-5205
St. John's Educational Thresholds Center has published a workbook for elementary and middle school youth in evaluation.

Interview with Karen Pittman

We asked Karen Pittman, Senior Vice President of the International Youth Foundation, to speak with us about what some of the challenges are to evaluating youth development programs, what issues arise when trying to promote policy changes and scale-up, and what other countries' experiences might bring to youth development programming in the United States.

(1) What are some of the challenges to evaluating youth development programs?

One of the primary challenges for the youth development field is the definition of outcomes, particularly intermediate ones. Many programs are not able to achieve larger outcomes such as reduced teen pregnancy, reduced violence, and increased literacy. Yet funding tends to be problem or outcome-focused, and there is pressure from funders for programs to overcommit. You need to find intermediate and proximate outcomes that are positive, achievable, and also understandable and/or seen as important by parents, policymakers, and others. Fortunately, good work has been done in identifying and building basic competencies in youth. These competencies translate into intermediate skills that help young people to navigate (work in diverse settings), socialize, and learn. If we see these intermediate outcomes now, then down the road, we should be able to point to achievement of larger outcomes.

The other primary challenge is defining what the "it" of programs is. Much of the research says, at a basic level, that what these programs deliver is relationships. But how do you define that? The Fund for the City of New York, Youth Development Project, is trying to answer this. It brought together about a dozen seasoned youth organizations to look at the research base on inputs and outputs and actually operationalize it. They developed three booklets around this [see *New & Noteworthy* section for information].

There are also challenges around comparison or control groups. In a healthy community, youth are often in more than one program or organization. This is how it should be. But you have a hard time bringing traditional evaluation methods such as comparison and control groups to this. It is difficult to find young people who receive "no services" in the true sense of the word. So the comparison, at the organizational level, is really a comparison of a known organization's services and activities against those of unknown organizations. This is why many large organizations (e.g., Girls Inc.) revert to evaluating the impact of a specific program within their organization (using their own members as a control group) rather than try to get a sense of the value of the overall experience.

(2) What elements might a "good" evaluation of youth development programs include?

Good evaluations of youth development programs should include several features. They should employ a participatory approach, including youth in the evaluation and working closely with the director and staff to understand their theory of change and to find out how the outcomes connect in a concrete way to what they are doing. Evaluators should also get a sense from staff as to where else people are getting services. Depending on the program, evaluators also need to pay careful attention to "doses" and services. Young people come in and out and can get very different services. Good evaluations also try to unbundle outputs and outcomes as much as possible. And, as I just mentioned, it is important to get as much information as possible about the other programs, organizations, and resources available in participants' lives.

(3) What are some of the challenges/lessons to translating research findings about successful youth programming into policy changes?

One of the problems is that there is not much research about what works — the number of unevaluated programs far outweighs the number evaluated. We are moving in uncharted territory.

Even where there is evaluation research, there are traditionally a few problems. First, there is the "black box" problem. Even when you have some fairly robust outcomes, you often aren't sure how you got them. Youth programming is complex — was it the field trips, the relationships, the youth workers that worked? So you are left saying "adopt the whole package." This is one of the lessons from YouthBuild — you have to implement all the components to get the outcomes. But, as YouthBuild learned, it is very hard to get people to do the whole thing because they want to take it apart. Then you can have quality problems.

The second problem is the outcomes themselves. One of the ways to effect policy change is to say very clearly "if you do this, this changes." Unfortunately, we do not have those rigorous increases or reductions or outcomes that have a lot of policy currency. We should also make a distinction, although an artificial one, between place-based programs and curricula. Place-based programs are more complex — the outcomes you get from those are tricky to translate into policy. We have not done a good job of translating lessons learned into our public institutions. Good evaluation also requires up-front thinking about replication and scale issues. Typically, this means serving more kids or having the program taken over into the school. Unfortunately, integration of youth programs into the school day and curricula is not happening. I think that, in some ways, this is because evaluations have not thought about what needs to be seen to change policy.

Two broad types of evidence are needed. The first centers around the question of effectiveness. Does the program produce results? In particular, does it produce results that have currency with the public institution being targeted for uptake? If schools are expected to pick up programs, we have to demonstrate links in school attendance, academic progress, classroom disruption, etc. If juvenile justice or public health dollars are to be reallocated, we have to demonstrate links to youth problems or to the intermediate outcomes that the public and policymakers link to youth problems. Youth development purists have strong negative reactions to these suggestions. But in the end, demonstrating improvements in civic awareness or leadership skills is nice but insufficient if no one cares. To the extent that the target institutional home is known, evaluation outcomes should be developed with this organization in mind.

The second type speaks to scale. Can the program be replicated or expanded? Again, if it is being institutionalized, could teachers do it? Are they willing? Are they proficient? Do they produce the same results as community-based workers? Could volunteers do it? Could it be picked up by organizations other than the one that created it? Is it affordable? Is there an infrastructure that could take it on to move it out to significantly more young people? To the extent that the program has been delivered in different settings, to different populations, by different actors, these should be seen as pretests of robustness. They should be examined, not washed over.

(4) What are some of the challenges/lessons in expanding successful programs? Are there some examples where this has been successfully done?

The "black box" problem also exists when thinking about expansion. It is hard to say which program dimensions are critical and which are "nice." It is very hard in doing an expansion or replication to be sure that you have the right components. It is also important to distinguish between going to scale in a place and nationwide. A lot of programs have gone to scale nationally, but have not done so where they live. This is an important point. National programs replicate by picking the strongest possible candidates for local implementation. Locally, any program going to scale will quickly run through its top picks and be forced to rely on organizations that may not have the capacity or experience needed to deliver the program. Technical assistance, training, and good models and principles become very important. Handbooks don't do it.

The Beacon Schools in New York City offer one of the best examples we have of going to scale in a place. They addressed the local capacity issue directly by building a very robust and aggressive technical assistance network for Beacons implementers. The results, I think, have been impressive. There is variation among the sites, but there is a bottom line of quality that is often not seen when over 70 organizations in one place are implementing a program idea.

The Beacons also offer a very good example of how to define outcomes. They have been very conservative in terms of what they have promised in terms of outcomes. They were careful not to commit to reducing crime rates and drug abuse rates. The Beacons were built around a youth rights issue — young people in every neighborhood need to have places to go, people to talk to, things to do. The Beacons implementers knew if they opened centers, kids would use them. They have documented this hypothesis well. In moving quickly, Beacons implementers and technical assistance providers did not hold delivery of any service hostage to quality — i.e., they did not let the perfect become the enemy of the good. However, they have worked very hard to bring best practice knowledge into the network.

(5) *Are there experiences/lessons of youth programming from other countries that might inform work in the U.S.?*

The main thing I have learned from working in other countries is that they tend to first think sustainability, then scale, then evaluation for effectiveness. It is not an anti-evaluation bias; it is just that they do not typically think "let's pilot something for ten years and really, really get it right and then take it to scale." What other countries see as most important when dealing with youth issues, locally or nationally, is that something is there for young people. In many instances, there is nothing there, and to think about piloting something for 50 kids until they get it right seems almost unconscionable. They take the best of what they know and work to bring it quickly to as many kids as possible in a sustainable way. Then they come back and improve the quality. What many in other countries assume is that quality is "fixable" and it is most important to get the system in place.

This is what the Beacons did. There was no pilot that had a major evaluation on which the next batch was hinged. In the first year, there were 9, then 27, and now 89. This was very much, "we're going to get stuff out to as many kids as possible and our benchmark will be doubling and redoubling each year until we have one in each neighborhood." Along the way, through a good public and private partnership, and investment in technical assistance and training, they have been working on quality.

The difference between programming here and programming elsewhere thus appears in some basic assumptions. In the United States, once we demonstrate the results of something, we face the issue of where the money for it comes from. In other countries, they figure out what they can do with what they have and work very quickly with communities to think about what to do and then get it implemented. The idea that you build it, pilot it, demonstrate that it works, and then someone will come along with the money, is a western, if not a uniquely American, view.

The other lesson is that there is much more of a balance in other countries between process and outcome evaluation. In this country, we assume that with evaluation we want to see individual-level changes. Other countries are often much more content to look at and approach evaluation as a look at the process, and they seek community-level changes. It isn't a methodology sophistication issue. It is really that those in other countries do not necessarily need or want to know that 26 percent of kids in a given program increased their test scores. They want to know that a reasonable number of kids are in the program and that the community is engaged and behind it. They want to know that those kids who have left the program are doing something in the community. They would not be very happy if the young person whose test scores increased left the community. In this process, they look for elements of scale and sustainability. ✦

Karen Horsch
Research Associate
HFRP

Upcoming Evaluation Conferences

Australasian Evaluation Society
"Evaluation — Challenging Boundaries"
October 4-8, 1999
Perth, Western Australia
Contact:
Keynote Conferences
PO Box 1126
West Leederville , Western Australia 6901
Tel: (+618) 9382-3799
http://www.ca.com.au/~keynote/conf_pge/cnf1eval.html

This conference will encourage delegates to explore the various boundaries that exist in the field of evaluation including cultural boundaries, theoretical boundaries, sectoral boundaries, and organizational boundaries. The main themes include: challenges in evaluation practice, evaluation – serving the public interest, the role of evaluation in challenging social issues, evaluation of intersectoral programs, and internal and external evaluation.

American Evaluation Association
"The Territory Ahead — Foundations and Frontiers"
November 3-6, 1999
Orlando, FL
Contact:
AEA Conference Committee
EdPA 330 Wulling Hall
86 Pleasant St. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Tel: (651) 503-6588
http://www.kistcon.com/aea

Workshops and discussions will examine the gains that have been made in evaluation over the past decades; clarify the unanswered questions that face the field; and build some alternative scenarios about the future of evaluation. ✦

Building Local Capacity for Evaluation: The Michigan Abstinence Partnership Evaluation

In recent years, evaluation has come to play an increasingly important role in enabling communities to promote and sustain change. Various methods have been used to assist communities in this endeavor, most notably, the empowerment model of evaluation. Ultimately, this model assists communities in evaluating themselves in a constant interchange between program planning and evaluation. For the last five years, the Michigan Abstinence Partnership (MAP) Evaluation Project has utilized an empowerment evaluation approach to increase capacity for evaluation for community coalitions throughout Michigan. This article discusses the evaluation design and provides a glimpse at some of the lessons learned from implementing this model.

Background

MAP is a statewide, public health initiative based on the belief that teaching abstinence to children aged nine to fourteen can help to promote positive health behaviors and reduce risk-taking behaviors later in life. The impetus for the development of MAP came from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) in 1993.

Formation of MAP stressed recruitment of a broad base of representatives in the community. Members of MAP include public health officials, educators, medical and health care providers, the religious community, parents, community leaders, child advocates ranging from Planned Parenthood to Michigan Right to Life, and businesses throughout the state.

Community coalitions direct and facilitate MAP programming at the local level. They are located in both rural and urban settings. Each community is encouraged to tailor programming to meet the individual needs of its population.

Evaluation Design

MAP stresses both statewide and local community-level evaluations. At the local level, community coalitions develop Community Action Plans that incorporate the evaluation of activities on three levels.

- First, process evaluation is used to examine how program activities were implemented and how they can be improved in the future.
- Second, the short-term impact on participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior is measured.
- Third, the long-term outcomes of program activities will be determined through a time-series analysis of community indicators.

The MDCH and the Michigan Public Health Institute, a non-profit research organization, joined efforts to devise a plan to provide evaluation support to local community coalitions. The primary goal of this project is to increase each community's capacity for evaluation while producing measurable outcomes for program activities. To accomplish this goal, an empowerment evaluation model was selected with a view toward coalition self-sufficiency. The project provides technical assistance in evaluation to community coalitions through workshops, individual site visits, regional technical assistance meetings, evaluation resource materials, and regular contact via fax and phone. Technical assistance to community coalition staff is provided in the following areas:

- evaluation planning, including the development of evaluation designs;
- developing goals and objectives;
- determining outcomes and outcome measures;

- developing quantitative and qualitative evaluation instrumentation;
- evaluation implementation, including data collection and analysis; and
- reporting and utilizing evaluation results.

Lessons Learned to Increase Community Capacity for Evaluation

Throughout the five-year Evaluation Project, several lessons learned have emerged from the activities of the project:

- ***Evaluation technical assistance must be tailored to the distinct cultural and political contexts of each community coalition.*** Each community exists in unique cultural surroundings. The technical assistance and evaluation needs of a Native American tribal school, for example, are very different from those of an urban teen center. The project staff must also be sensitive to politics that exist within each community. Sensitivity to these factors contributes to the building and maintenance of trusting working relationships.

- ***Communities must be met where they are.*** This is true both figuratively and geographically. Communities exist across a continuum of capacities and resources. Technical assistance must be tailored to meet individual needs. The empowerment evaluation model allows the evaluation to adapt on an individual level to the needs and expectations of the community. It is also important to consider where communities are geographically. Travel to each coalition site is invaluable because site visits allow the evaluation staff to witness firsthand the work surroundings, staff dynamics, and program implementation.

- ***Networking with other community coalitions is important.*** As the Partnership has evolved, the communities have gained new insights and ideas from their colleagues around the state. Networking has emerged as an important theme in the evaluation. At trainings and workshops, adequate time is scheduled into the day to insure an opportunity for discussion and sharing.

continued on page 10

SPOTLIGHT

New Strategies in Foundation Grantmaking for Children and Youth

In 1998 the W.K. Kellogg Foundation commissioned the Harvard Family Research Project to examine trends in foundation grantmaking for children and youth. The Foundation wanted to use the information for its own grantmaking and to share the results with others in the philanthropic community. Nineteen foundations participated in this survey, which consisted of a documentary review, a questionnaire, and interviews with 23 senior officers. The foundations included most of the largest and wealthiest, and those whose grantmaking focused heavily on children and youth. Summarized below are the patterns of grantmaking for youth, the trends in grantmaking strategies, and the uses of evaluation among the foundations surveyed.

Patterns of Grantmaking for Youth

Most surveyed foundations have stable commitments to youth development. Of 11 foundations that keep data by age categories, 6 provide a quarter or more of their funds to youth ages 14-20. The bulk of foundation funds for children and youth are largely allocated to education, youth development, and school-to-work initiatives.

Grantmaking that serves youth tends to be fragmented among different program areas—education, community development, health, and so on. Foundation officers, however, increasingly view youth development as a bridge to link these areas. The connection between education and youth development, for example, supports a range of school-linked service models and partnerships between schools and youth-serving community organizations. Other cross-cutting areas are youth and the arts, youth and community development, and the connection between domestic and international youth development.

Foundations adopt the principles of positive youth development, which emphasize human assets and participation in decision making. They support community foundations to involve youth in community grantmaking and youth-initiated efforts in leadership development and community improvement.

Foundation officers interviewed agree that the youth development field needs a grantmaking strategy that focuses on capacity building, including training, leadership, and support for national intermediaries. Part of this effort consists of expanding the knowledge base through research on what promotes positive youth development and program evaluation, in order to identify and disseminate best practices.

Recognizing that the problems of youth are interconnected and require comprehensive solutions, foundations are shifting their grantmaking strategies from categorical to comprehensive initiatives (i.e., initiatives that cut across several different program areas). Several are concentrating more resources on long-term, place-based community strategies designed to improve outcomes for children and youth. Other foundations are integrating best practices from youth development programs into crisis intervention programs or established community-based education and cultural programs previously without a specific youth development focus.

Trends in Grantmaking Strategies

These grantmaking patterns exist within broader foundation efforts to scale-up and sustain effective programs and policies. The surveyed foundations are rethinking their basic assumptions about how to create and sustain change on a more widespread basis. In the past, much grantmaking was based on a theory of linear sequential change. In this sequence, foundation-sponsored research and demonstration can lead to effective programs which are then disseminated and replicated and, finally, scaled-up. Foundations assume leadership in creating innovative pro-

continued on page 10

Spotlight *continued from page 9*
grams and expect the public sector to support the scale-up of programs with demonstrated effectiveness.

Based on their own critiques of past grantmaking experiences and strategic planning work, the foundations are beginning to operate on a comprehensive and simultaneous theory of change. The theory is that simultaneous and multicomponent strategies will lead to changes in the operating environment, which will create the demand, conditions, and capacity for scale-up and sustainability.

Most of the surveyed foundations fund in all the major grantmaking categories of knowledge development, capacity building, policy development, service delivery, dissemination, and public engagement. What is interesting is the way that these elements are put together into larger strategies from the start. For example, the multicomponent strategies simultaneously include support of research and demonstration, field development and expansion, and public engagement strategies. Unlike the linear theory of change, foundations assume leadership in creating the demand for scaled-up initiatives from their inception.

> Foundation officers interviewed agree that the youth development field needs a grantmaking strategy that focuses on capacity building, including training, leadership, and support for national intermediaries.

Uses of Evaluation

The shift to a multicomponent strategy entails the continuous development of knowledge to guide planning and implementation. Knowledge development consists of more diverse types of knowledge for a broader group of stakeholders and a greater range of purposes. Beyond research and demonstration, the expanded purposes include: understanding public perception of youth issues and informing the public about them; building the demand for policy change and accountability; determining and disseminating best practices for capacity building and scale-up; and using research and evaluation to maintain effectiveness.

All but one of the foundation officers interviewed reported that evaluation is more important now than in the past. They evaluate their large initiatives to learn about what is working and to identify the lessons for their strategies of scale-up and sustainability. Most foundations do not evaluate all individual grants. Many, however, require grantees to specify goals, benchmarks, outcomes, and lessons learned as part of their grantees' reporting procedures. About half are engaged in some activity to build grantee learning and evaluation capacity.

As learning and evaluation play a greater role within these foundations, several officers suggested that more cross-foundation discussion about evaluation issues and challenges would be useful. They also suggested including similar discussions about the theories of change underlying emerging grantmaking strategies and efforts to develop integrated learning, evaluation, and communication strategies. Sharing results and lessons learned would be particularly beneficial in the changing context of grantmaking for children and youth. ✦

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Evaluations *continued from page 9*

- ***Evaluation must be incorporated into the Community Action Plan.*** Community coalition programming and evaluation are more successful when planned early. The evaluation staff support coalitions with the development of program goals, objectives, and instruments through technical assistance before programs are implemented.

- ***Coalitions should be encouraged to take more responsibility for the evaluation as they progress by using community supports.*** As community coalition staff become more comfortable with evaluation, the project encourages them to seek evaluation support within their local community. Whether it is a college intern seeking experience or a knowledgeable coalition member, these people are invaluable to the sustainability of the evaluation.

As the first five years of the MAP Evaluation Project draw to a close, there have been many valuable lessons learned from the empowerment model of evaluation. These lessons may assist other communities that seek to increase capacity for evaluation and sustain the changes that the programs promote. ✦

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For information on submitting articles to *The Evaluation Exchange*, please call (617) 495-9108 or visit our Web site: http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval

Job Opening

The Harvard Family Research Project is looking to hire a Research Analyst to work 75% on new project: building a comprehensive learning system in the after-school field; 25% on research/writing for *The Evaluation Exchange*. For full job description and application instructions, go to http://jobs.harvard.edu/jobs/search_req Refer to requisition #2145.

We regret that we cannot provide copies of the materials listed below. Please contact the publisher or authoring organization directly.

American Youth Policy Forum. (1997). *Some things do make a difference for youth: A compendium of youth programs and practices from the American Youth Policy Forum*. Washington, DC: Author. This publication summarizes 69 evaluation studies and reports of 49 programmatic interventions. The document begins with a summary of the basic principles for effective youth programs. The summaries are divided into three sections: Extended Learning; Building on the Community; and Increasing Retention and Postsecondary Education Options. Included in each summary is an overview, evidence of effectiveness, key components, contributing factors, study methodology, geographic areas served, contact information, and update on changes since the evaluation. The publication concludes with an afterword on implications for youth policy and practice. *Tel: (202) 775-9731. American Youth Policy Forum, 1836 Jefferson Place, N.W., Suite 719, Washington, DC 20036-2505.*

DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. (1995). *Strengthening the youth work profession: Resource guide*. New York, NY: Author. This guide provides information on organizations and publications/training materials related to the professional development of youth workers. Each entry has a brief description of the organization/publication and contact/order information. *Tel: (212) 251-9800. http://www.wallacefunds.org*

Fund for the City of New York. (1998). *Core competencies for youth work. A guided tour of youth development. The handbook of positive youth outcomes.* New York, NY: Author. These three guidebooks, developed and written by the Networks for Youth Development (a peer network of youth organizations promoting youth development as a field of practice and mastery), identify some of the key issues in the area of youth development, based on practical experience. The Core Competencies guide describes essential competencies that youth workers need and outlines what they look like in practice. The Guided Tour operationalizes the conceptual framework of youth development into visible organizational practices. The Outcomes Handbook defines the competencies that youth acquire through involvement in youth development programs. *Tel: (212) 925-6675. Fannie Olivera, Fund for the City of New York. Youth Development Institute. 121 Avenue of the Americas, 6th Floor. New York, NY 10013.*

Guerra, Nancy G. & Williams, Kirk R. *A program planning guide for youth violence prevention: A risk-focused approach.* Boulder, CO: Author. This planning guide, by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, details the steps for planning violence prevention programs, including evaluation strategies, building on risk, and protective factors. This publication includes worksheets that can be used to guide communities in 1) defining the violence problems in their communities; 2) assessing community resources; 3) identifying promising programs; and 4) thinking about implementation and evaluation strategies. *http://patch.colorado.edu/cspv/infohouse/publications.html*

Morley, Elaine & Rossman, Shelli B. (1997). *Helping at-risk youth: Lessons from community-based initiatives.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Drawing on the experiences of three national initiatives to help youth at risk (Communities in Schools, SafeFutures, and Children at Risk), this report presents findings and suggestions that may benefit other communities that are seeking to introduce or that already are in the process of implementing such efforts. Intended for both community leaders and program administrators, the report addresses five topics: services integration and case management; parental involvement; using volunteers for tutoring and mentoring; fund raising and marketing; and monitoring program outcomes. The report also includes a checklist of suggested practices. *http://www.urban.org/family/helpyouth.html*

***Program Evaluation Newsletter*. Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.** This bimonthly publication is designed to assist programs in making decisions around program evaluation issues. It focuses on evaluation techniques and theory, and also provides advice on how programs can conduct evaluations that are meaningful and useful. $18.00 for a one-year subscription. *http://patch.colorado.edu/cspv/infohouse/publications.html*

Search Institute. (1998). *Healthy communities/healthy youth tool kit.* Minneapolis, MN: Author. Designed to meet the needs of communities and organizations looking for help with starting and sustaining an asset-building effort, this easy-to-use reference guide offers ideas, strategies, and examples. Included are guidelines for launching and sustaining a community-wide effort; discussions of issues related to mobilizing communities; suggestions on additional publications and resources; ready-to-use worksheets and handouts; and samples of brochures, newsletters, and other awareness-raising materials from communities across the nation. *Tel: (877) 240-7251. Search Institute, P.O. Box 371, Minneapolis, MN 55440-9732.*

***Youth today: The newspaper on youth work*.** This publication of the American Youth Work Center provides information on best practices in youth service programs; career and networking opportunities; coverage of funding and judicial, regulatory and legislative matters; grant opportunities; professional development events; new products; and career moves. *Tel: (202) 785-0764. 1200 17th Street, N.W., 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20036-3006. E-mail: hn2759@handsnet.org* ✦

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Electronic Mailbox

Adolescence Directory On-Line
http://education.indiana.edu/cas/adol/adol.html
Adolescence Directory On-Line (ADOL) is an electronic guide to information on adolescent issues, provided by the Center for Adolescent Studies at Indiana University. It provides electronic sources in the areas of conflict and violence; mental health issues; health and health risk issues; counselor resources; and teens only.

Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network
http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu
The Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERNet) provides practical, research-based information on children, youth, and families. Information in this Internet-based service is provided by universities collaborating in the Cooperative Extension Service Children, Youth, and Family Network project. This site provides descriptions of successful programs, practical information on child and youth development, research reports, statistics, funding resources, evaluation tools, and links to other Internet resources.

Children, Youth and Family Consortium
http://www.cyfc.umn.edu
The Children, Youth and Family Consortium's Electronic Clearinghouse, housed at the University of Minnesota, is an electronic bridge to information and resources on children, youth, and families. The site features articles, research materials, and information related to the health, education, and well-being of children, youth, and families.

FEDSTATS
http://www.fedstats.gov
Maintained by the Federal Interagency Council on Statistical Policy, this Web site provides easy access to the full range of statistics and information produced by more than 70 federal agencies. Included are statistics from the Bureau of the Census, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Administration for Children and Families, the Center for Mental Health Service, and the Department of Health and Human Services. This site also provides some regional statistics.

U.S. Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov
The U.S. Department of Education's Web site provides information on the Department's programs, publications, research, and statistics as well as links to other relevant Web sites.

YouthInfo
http://youth.os.dhhs.gov
This Web site, maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides the latest information about America's adolescents. It includes current news, reports, and other publications, and speeches on youth topics.

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