



CityMatCH Urban MCH Leadership Conference
Zaid Gayle – September 20, 2011
San Francisco, CA
Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leaders


MISSION

- Peace4Kids provides programs and services for foster and at-risk youth ages 4-18, and after they transition to adulthood until age 24. Peace4Kids is truly on the front lines in addressing the needs of foster and at-risk youth in the South Los Angeles neighborhoods of Watts, Willowbrook and Compton.
- We are dedicated to empowering foster and at-risk youth by providing community as family. We create a strong foundation through programs focused on creative expression and life skills, allowing our kids to discover their unique voice and limitless potential for success.




Race & Space –Child Welfare

- African-American Children make up 9% of the youth population in Los Angeles County but are 30% of the foster care population
- Latino youth make up over 40% of the foster youth population in Los Angeles County
- In the area that Peace4Kids serves there almost 3x more substantiated cases of child neglect and abuse than the Los Angeles County average



Cultural Identity Development in Foster Youth
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ABSTRACT

While the experiences of foster youth (FY) are relevant in policy and system reform, very little research attempts to hear from them directly. Our methodology involved training FY to conduct a study with other FY. Despite challenges inherent to participant action research, this pilot study has highlighted the potential for youth to participate in the process. Results for FY participating in the Peace4Kids creative education program revealed a common positive attitude about the future. 1) Foster youth value education as a pathway to change their future for the better, and 2) FY have found resources for support and love outside of their family.

HYPOTHESIS

Participant FY share common experiences in the foster care system that contribute to the development of foster youth culture.

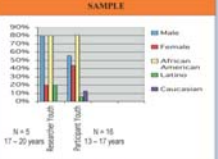
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Research and training for professionals working with FY typically use a deficit-based model (Catalano et al., 2004; 2008)
- Therefore, this study seeks to capture the strengths that FY possess (Catalano, 2004; Catalano et al., 2008)
- The foster care system itself reduces the opportunities that FY have to form decisions regarding their future
- The competence and confidence that youth need to gain in order to function well in society as adults can only come from participation in that world (Morrow et al., 2010)
- Participation in the foster care system creates a set of unique shared experiences that influence cultural identity
- Research with teenagers indicates that they are likely to have difficulty with surveys and interviews (Lewin et al., 2011). FY increase these obstacles with trauma and trust issues
- Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods empower participants to identify their strengths and resources, and give them more control in their lives (Foster, 2008; Kessler & Rhee, 2008; 2010)

CHALLENGES

- Scheduling conflicts during training and data collection
- Researcher FY school and work responsibilities
- Transportation issues
- Inexperience of researchers
- Inconsistencies in interview techniques
- Questions asked by researcher FY varied
- Not all questions asked
- Level of probing varied
- Length of interviews varied greatly

SAMPLE



MEASURES

- Walk the Line game with prompts created by researcher FY
- Interview based on responses in Walk the Line game

PROCEDURES

- Researcher FY were educated on cultural identity through theory, research, and related activities
- Choice of measures evolved from discussions and activities
- Professional researcher trained researcher FY on data collection procedures
- Participants volunteered from Peace4Kids teen program and were brought to the research room in small groups of 4
- Project coordinator assigned each participant an ID and reviewed consent procedures and game instructions
- Researcher FY read Walk the Line game prompts to 4 participant FY while 4 researcher FY were assigned to record participant FY responses on the line in response to each prompt
- Researcher FY individually interviewed participant FY about their responses in the game; audio-tapes were transcribed and coded

Training of Researcher FY (20 hours)

Data Collection (4 participant FY in each of 4 sessions)

Walk the Line Game (FY research experience)

One-on-one Interviews (professional and transcribed)

Data Analysis

RESULTS

- Strength: Value education to achieve**
 "For me to be successful, I would have to go to school. I would have to have a positive attitude to be well-received to be who I want to be."
 83% experienced 2 or more school transfers in a single year
 94% believe they will have some success in school
- Strength: Seek love and support outside of the family**
 "When I'm at home, I can really get my mother. I can just talk it out with her and she'll probably get my head right or just let me something I can do to get out of trouble or just stay away from what happened or something like that."
 20% have stable placements
 50% experienced 2 or more foster homes in a single year
 69% have been in foster care for 3 or more years
 31% believe they have family support
- Strength: Respectful**
 "You gotta know who your resources are. Peace4Kids is a really good resource and they have more resources... do like a chain reaction."
 87.5% have some level of trust in others
 75% have someone to turn to for guidance
 69% feel loved and supported by someone
 69% were willing to seek help
- Strength: Positive attitude**
 "It's a lot of things you could get out of foster care. Like a regular person couldn't get... different types of programs that can help you with your future and stuff."
 "People say that foster care is bad. I don't think it's bad. I just think it's a way to have love families."

| | F | P |
|----------------------------------|------|--------|
| Expectations for future success | 46 | .00* |
| Length of time in foster care | | |
| Expectations for future success | -.52 | .001** |
| Number of foster care placements | | |
| Trust level | .58 | .00* |
| Support level | | |
| School success benefits | -.56 | .00* |
| Placement instability | | |

Cultural Identity: Foster care experience is an integral contributor to the development of identity

- 77% described sharing a mutual understanding with other foster youth that could not be replicated with non-FY

| | F | P |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|
| Influence of Foster Care Identity | 2.43 | .00* |
| Influence of Ethnic/Racial Identity | | |

DISCUSSION

- FY with fewer placements and fewer school transfers were most likely to believe they would be successful in school
- FY with unstable school and family lives perceived school success as leading to a better life
- Belief that education may change their situation for the better
- Interviews revealed that FY have unrealistic views of their potential to achieve success through education
- Choice to attend UCLA or USC despite history of school failure
- Positive attitude may help them endure difficult life circumstances + coping strategy
- Family support associated with trust for others
- Only 21% had strong levels of family support
- However, nearly 88% of FY had found someone to trust
- Resources outside of the family such as Peace4Kids
- Community as Family framework at Peace4Kids
- Foster care (FC) experience formative in development of cultural identity
- FY describe life struggles in response to multiple home/school moves
- Emotional hardness
- Expectation of rejection
- Distance from peers
- Struggles are multidimensional outside of FC
- PAR helps to identify individual strengths and resources
- Focus on finding positive side of FC

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Expansion of project (DCU Grant under review)
- New group of researcher youth are in training
- Data collection outside of Peace4Kids
- Program evaluation of Peace4Kids (DCU Grant under review)
- Best practices in mentoring
- Group mentoring
- Youth-related one-to-one mentoring matches
- Culturally relevant mentoring
- Create Public Service Announcement for FC professionals
- Strength-based description of FY and FC culture

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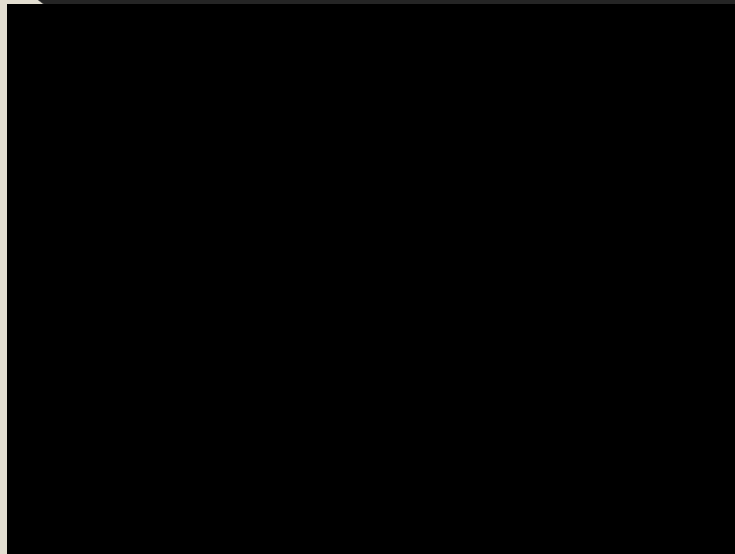
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Cultural Identity vs. Race

- ◆ Cultural Identity: Foster care experience is an integral contributor to the development of identity
 - ◇ 77% described sharing a mutual understanding with other foster youth that could not be replicated with non-FY

| | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
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Youth Advocacy – Equity in Action



Results & Future

- AB12 signed into law and goes into effect in January of 2012
- Youth advocates formed their own Youth Council, FosterWise, to advise system reform for TAY in Los Angeles County.
- Youth Advocates serve on a Statewide Youth Council to inform implementation of AB12 and are working on supplemental legislation, AB212, to improve access for all FC populations.
- As a result of the Media Campaign and Publicity, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors has added a 4th goal of "Self-Sufficiency" for Child Welfare services
- New cohort of youth advocates are working with 15 architecture students from Woodbury University to redesign the built environment around the program site
- Youth advocates are broadening their research for the YLSP to include other youth in Los Angeles County and California