Life after Project Effort: Applying Values Acquired in a Responsibility-based Physical Activity Program

Vida después del "Proyecto Esfuerzo": Aplicación de los valores adquiridos en un programa de actividad física basado en la responsabilidad

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Abstract

Among physical activity curricular models used in the youth development field, the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model has been widely incorporated in many underserved youth community and school physical education programs around the United States and the world (Hellison, 2011). Project Effort is an extended day program that uses the TPSR model as a framework. Literature has shown that TPSR programs and Project Effort have had a positive impact on the life of the participants. The purpose of this study was to investigate what TPSR values former participants' have acquired in Project Effort and through other sources, and how they have guided their lives. A multiple-case design was implemented to understand this phenomenon. The findings showed that former participants considered that four TPSR values (i.e. respect, effort, self-direction, helping others) were really important to their lives. Participants reported that they learned the TPSR values of helping others and leadership in Project Effort. Also they mentioned that they acquired the TPSR life skills of being reflective, teamwork, and goal setting in Project Effort. The TPSR value of helping others, and the TPSR life skill of being reflective acquired in Project Effort were most useful to the participants. Participants learned the TPSR value of self-direction and the TPSR values of respect and caring.

Key words: responsibility; youth programs; values transfer; underserved youth; TPSR values.

Resumen

Entre los modelos curriculares de actividad física utilizados para el desarrollo de la juventud, la enseñanza personalizada y el modelo de Enseñanza de la Responsabilidad Personal y Social (TPSR) han sido ampliamente incorporados en muchas comunidades los jóvenes marginados y en programas de educación física escolares en Estados Unidos y en el mundo (Hellison, 2011). El proyecto esfuerzo es un programa de día extendido que utiliza el modelo TPSR como fundamento. La literatura ha demostrado que los programas TPSR y el Proyecto Esfuerzo han tenido un impacto positivo en la vida de los participantes. El propósito de este estudio fue investigar qué valores promocionados por el modelo TPSR habían aprendido los que fueron participantes a través del Proyecto Esfuerzo y a través de otras vías, y cómo estos valores habían guiado su vida. Se diseñó un estudio de caso múltiple para entender este fenómeno. Los resultados mostraron que los antiguos participantes consideraron que cuatro valores TPRS (esto es, respeto, esfuerzo, auto-dirección, ayudar a los demás) eran realmente importante para sus vidas. También indicaron que aprendieron en el proyecto esfuerzo valores del TPRS como ayudar a los demás y de liderazgo. Estos participantes indicaron que en el Proyecto Esfuerzo habían aprendido habilidades del TPRS para la vida tales como ser reflexivos, trabajar en equipo y el establecimiento de objetivos. Los valores del TPSR ayudar a los demás y ser reflexivo que aprendieron en el Proyecto Esfuerzo fueron las más útiles para los participantes. Los participantes aprendieron valores del TPSR como la autodirección, el respeto de respeto y cariño hacia los demás.

Palabras claves: responsabilidad; programas para jóvenes; trasferencia de valores; jóvenes en desventaja; valores del modelo de responsabilidad.

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Introduction

Recently, there has been a renewed interest by educators and other service professionals in developing programs that focus on working with underserved children (Bloomberg, Ganey, Alba, Quintero, & Alvarez, 2003; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Hellison, Cutforth, Kallusky, Martinek, Parker, & Stiehl, 2000; Lerner, 2006; McLaughlin, 2000; Menestrel & Perkins, 2007). The youth development field has emerged as one of the most promising responses to challenges that underserved youth face on a daily basis. During the last decades, in an attempt to meet youths' needs and challenges more effectively, the field of youth development has gradually shifted from a deficit-based model or medical model to an asset-based one (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004; Hellison et al., 2000; Martinek & Hellison, 2009). Instead of viewing children and youth as problems to fix, the asset-based model builds on youngsters' strengths rather than their weaknesses. It also provides a holistic approach for kids and allows them to be empowered (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004; Hellison et al., 2000).

The field of youth development has viewed sport and physical activity as a vehicle for fostering youth development principles among youngsters during the past decade (Cote, Strachan, & Frazer-Thomas, 2008; Hellison et al., 2000; Martinek & Hellison, 2009; Menestrel & Perkins, 2007). Sport and physical activity programs have been widely accepted approaches to reach out to underserved youth (Hartmann, 2003). Research on sport participation has demonstrated the potential for development across different physical, health, psychological, academic, and social domains (Cote et al., 2008; Menestrel & Perkins, 2007; Theokas, 2009).

Among physical activity curricular models used in after-school programs, the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model (TPSR) (Hellison, 2011) has been widely incorporated in many underserved youth community and school physical education programs around the United States and the world (Hellison, 2011). The TPSR model is a values-based curriculum that uses fitness, motor skills instruction, sports, games, and other human movement activities as a vehicle for helping youth become more personally responsible for themselves, and more socially and morally responsible for the well-being of others (Hellison et al., 2000). Another focus of Hellison's model is to ultimately help students apply these concepts in other areas of their lives. To accomplish this, Hellison relies on five levels of responsibility: (a) respecting the rights and feeling of others, (b) effort, (c) self-direction, (d) helping others, and (e) taking it outside the gym. Strategies used to help participants put the levels into practice are awareness talk, direct instruction, individual decision making, group decision making, and relational time.

With the rapid increase of programs using the TPSR model, the evaluation of programs using Hellison's model has also increased (Hellison & Walsh, 2002, Martinek, 2012). The research on the TPSR has been focused on three areas. The first area includes the participants' improvements in in-program TPSR goals. It has been shown that youth that have participated in TPSR programs have increased their effort level, self-direction, and ability to help others (Hellison & Walsh, 2002). In addition, other researchers have reported self-worth improvement among participants (Hellison & Georgiadis, 1992), improvement in their ability to work as a team (Wright, 2001), and improvement in interpersonal relationships (Cutforth, 1997).

The second area of TPSR studies has focused on cross-age teaching. Cutforth and Puckett (1999) reported that cross-age teaching improved participants' self-confidence, concern for others, and problem solving skills. Similarly, Cutforth (2000) reported that cross-age teaching helps participants become more independent and reflective.

The third area evaluated is the transferability of TPSR goals to other settings. Findings of these studies showed that participants were able to improve their self-esteem, overall attitude, and maturity level in the classroom (Kallusky, 1991; Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 1999; Martinek & Lee, 2012; Lee & Martinek, 2013,). Still, another study revealed that participants were willing to share and help more at home (Mulaudzi, 1995).

One of the many after-school programs that are guided by the TPSR framework is Project Effort. This program is located in southeastern Greensboro, North Carolina. Project Effort was created with the main goal of getting children to reinvest their energies in school and become healthy, competent young adults (Martinek & Schilling, 2003). To accomplish this, the program uses the five TPSR levels of responsibility as a guide for participants. Project Effort is divided into three main components: (a) sport clubs, (b) a mentoring program, and (c) Youth Leader Corps. The sport clubs focus on teaching participants to take more responsibility for themselves and for others (Martinek & Ruiz, 2005, Lee & Martinek, 2013). The second component, the mentoring program, was created to help participants transfer the values and goals learned in the sport clubs to their schools, homes, and communities.

The Youth Leader Corps is the third component and it provides leadership opportunities to middle and high school students who serve young children in their communities. Most of the youth leaders are former members of the sport clubs.

Multiple research studies have been conducted to exam the effects that Project Effort has on its participants. They can be divided into three main areas. The first area has centered on the various levels of the responsibility model and how participants can transfer it to other settings (Martinek, Mclaughlin, & Schilling, 1999; Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001). For example, Martinek, Schilling, and Johnson (2001) reported that teachers indicated that 88% of the club members appeared to show effort most or some of the time in their classroom. Similarly, Martinek, et al. (1999) reported that participants improved their behaviors during school. However, Lee and Martinek (2009, 2013) and Martinek & Lee (2012), provided evidence that transferability does not occur automatically and depends on program structure, individuals' personal characteristics, and school climate.

The second area being evaluated was the participants' program commitment (Schilling, 2001; Schilling, Martinek, & Carson, 2007). Schilling (2001) reported that traits such as effort, persistence, having a positive attitude, enjoyment, motivation, and length of program involvement were reported by club members as very influential in determining their level of program commitment. The third and final area looked at leadership ability (Martinek, Schilling, & Hellison, 2006; Schilling, 2001). For example, Martinek et al. (2006) found that youth leaders in the program advance through stages of leadership. Some of the leaders were categorized in the early stages of leadership (e.g. needs-based leadership and focusing on planning and teaching), and others were categorized in the latter stages (e.g. reflective leadership and compassionate leadership).

One key question that has yet to be specifically addressed is the level of influence that TPSR programs has on former participants' lives. Presently, there is no research conducted that addresses such a phenomena. Therefore, the intent of this study was to develop an understanding of how the Project Effort experiences have guided former participants' lives.

Studying how a TPSR physical activity program guided former participants' lives is important for a couple of reasons. First, this type of investigation expands the TPSR body of knowledge about long-term impact of values-based programming. Some participants might feel that the program did not play a role in their life after they culminated participation, however, others might consider that it did play a role. Second, knowing this can help practitioners and program directors develop, modify, or implement future the TPSR curriculum and programs.

One way to investigate these phenomena is through the lens of the Triangle Model of Responsibility (TMR) (Schlenker, Britt, Pennington, Murphy, & Doherty, 1994). This theoretical model has been used in different scenarios to measure personal responsibility or to predict engagement in certain types of events (Schlenker, 1999; Schlenker et al., 1994; Planas, Kimberlin, Segal, Brushwood, Helper, & Schlenker, 2005). The TMR involves three elements: (a) the event that occurred, (b) the prescription that informs and guide individuals' behaviors in relation to the event, and (c) the identity and personal attributes that are pertinent to the event. For the purpose of this study, the element of event refers to how participants have lived their lives after culminating participation in Project Effort; the element of prescription refers to the experiences provided by Project Effort; and the element of identity refers to participants' perception of the importance of TPSR values.

According to Schenkler et al. (1994), there are three paired linkages among these three elements. These three linkages are going to be used to describe the extent that Project Effort has guided former participants' lives. Prescription-identity, refers to the extent to which the individuals' values are aligned with the experiences provided by Project Effort. Prescription-event refers to the extent in which individuals' perceptions of Project Effort experiences have guided their lives. The final linkage, identity-event, relates to how TPSR values that are important to the participants were acquired through other sources and how they guided their lives.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate what TPSR values and former participants' have acquired in Project Effort and through other sources, and how they have guided their lives. Specific questions that guided this research were:

1. How are the values that guide former participants lives aligned with the experiences provided by Project Effort? (Related to Prescription-Identity Link)

2. How have former participants' perceptions of Project Effort experiences guided the way they have lived their lives? (Related to Prescription–Event link)

3. How have TPSR values acquired through other sources guided participants' lives? (Related to Identity–Event link)

Research Design

Description of Project Effort

Project Effort was developed twenty years ago in response to requests by local school officials and teachers for alternative programs to help address the personal and social needs of their students. The participants of the program were, and still are, recommended by teachers, counselors, and principals because of their struggle within the school culture. Students recommended to Project Effort were more susceptible to school suspension, combative behaviors and indifference toward school (Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001). Also, Guilford County elementary teachers reported seeing more angry and violent children in their classroom, especially in the underserved areas of Greensboro. In response to these youth issues, Project Effort was created with the main goal of getting children to reinvest their energies in schooling and become healthy, competent young adults (Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001).

Presently, Project Effort is running the programs for two low income immigrant communities. Most of the children are from Africa and Asia and some have come to the United States as refugees. It is clear that Project Effort has adapted to the rapid growth of immigrant population and is reaching out to meet the needs of its youth in Greensboro.

Project Effort Components

There were three main components of Project Effort. One of the components is the sport clubs. The primary purpose of the sport clubs is not to recreate or develop sport skills among participants. Rather, the sport clubs focus on teaching participants to take more responsibility for themselves and for others (Martinek & Ruiz, 2005). Schilling and Martinek (2001) elucidated that the Sport clubs help elementary and middle school children develop personal and social responsibility skills through participation in a value-based sports program. To accomplish this, Project Effort uses the TPSR model as a framework for developing learning experiences for its participants.

A second component of Project Effort is mentoring. Club members often struggle to apply the values and goals that they learn in the sports club into school. Therefore, the mentoring program was created to help participants transfer the values and goals learned in the sport club into their schools, homes, and communities (Martinek & Ruiz, 2005). The focus of the mentoring program is on working on goal setting to redirect poor academic performance and social behaviors (Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001). Also, goal setting helps children gain a sense of control over the successes and failures in their social and school life.

The third part of Project Effort is the Youth Leader Corps. The Youth Leader Corps is an advanced component of Project Effort. The goal of the Youth Leader Corps program is to provide leadership opportunities to middle and high school students by serving young children, ages 8-12, from the Boys and Girls Club and other parts of the community. Most of the youth leaders that participate in the Corps have graduated from the sport club. The program allows youth leaders to run their own sport club one day a week during most of the school year. That is, that youth leaders are responsible for organizing sport activities and conducting one-hour lessons for younger kids that focus on the responsibility model (Schilling & Martinek, 2001).

Before running their own sports club youth leaders receive at least two training sessions by Project Effort staff members. In these sessions, they are asked to take responsibility for planning and conducting lesson plans according to the responsibility model format and goals. Also, the youth leaders are paired with a Project Effort staff member who assists them

through the entire process (Martinek & Ruiz, 2005). In a typical session, the youth leaders have to prepare their teaching station, impart their lesson according to the responsibility model (e.g. conduct awareness talk, teach the sport activities, and engage kids in reflection), participate in a group reflection with their peers, and prepare their lesson plan for the next week.

Sampling

Five participants participated in this study. Two purposeful sampling techniques were used to recruit participants for this study (Patton, 2002). Criterion sampling was one of the techniques. This technique permits the investigator to set various criteria that all participants must meet in order to obtain relevant data. The screening process for the criterion sampling consists of two criteria. All participants were older than 18 and former members of Project Effort for at least three years. The last criterion, being a former member of Project Effort, was selected in relation to the element of prescription in the TMR. This means that all participants had to be involved in the program for a prolonged time.

Maximum variation sampling was the other technique used in this investigation (Patton, 2002). In qualitative research this technique is used to understand how a phenomenon is perceived by different types of people in different types of setting. Also, maximum variation sampling helps the researcher to discover and describe the various themes and outcomes that are common across a number of participants (Patton 2002).

Screening included three criteria in the maximum variation sampling. The gender of the participants was one of the criteria; two of the participants were male and three female. The second criterion was related to the native origins of the participants. Two of the participants (a male and a female) were born in a foreign country. The remaining participants were from the United Stated. This allowed the researcher to provide different perspectives based on gender and native origins. Finally, the third criterion was related to the trajectories of the participants. Participants' trajectories in this study were the workforce, college, and parenthood.

Procedures

Consent forms were distributed to the subjects and returned the following week. Once the participants returned the consent forms, the researcher discussed the schedule with the participants for two interview sessions. Before the first interview, the participants filled out a demographic questionnaire. All interviews lasted approximately one hour and were recorded on a digital recorder. There was a period of approximately seven days between interviews. All interviews were conducted in a conference room at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Member checks were conducted three weeks after the last interview. Location of the member check was in the same location where the interviews took place. The participants received a thank you note at the end of the interviews.

Data Collection

One of the data sources focused on demographic information such as name, gender, age, and ethnicity. Also, it included information about the participants' family, religion, education, and work history.

A second data source was semi-structured interviews. This was the primary method used in the research study. Semi-structured interviews are considered a key research tool in multiple-case studies designs (Merriam, 1998). This type of interview format is based on the assumption that the participant defines the world in unique ways. Semi-structured interviews permit the researcher to be flexible, and guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored.

According to Patton (2002), the purpose of this type of interview is to gain the perspective of the person being interviewed in a non-biasing way. Finally, the interviews allowed the researcher to obtain valuable data that could not be obtained through observation. The research was established on the perceptions, reflections, and memories of the participants.

As part of the interview sessions, a card sort method was used. The purpose of using the card sort was that it provided an additional method for obtaining important information related to the questions asked, rather, than just relying on the participant's memory and ability to communicate during a short period of time.

The procedure for creating the card sort for both interview sessions consisted of two steps. First, the researcher created a list of seven TPSR values taught in Project Effort (i.e., Accepting others, Respecting others, Trying your Best-Effort , Being Self-directed, Helping Others, Caring for Others, and Leading Others). Each value was written on a separate index card. The second step consisted of creating three categories where the participants would classify the values. For the first interview session, three categories were created (i.e. "really important," "kind of important," and "not very important") in order to obtain information about what are the most important values that they believe in as a person. Another three categories were created ("acquired in Project Effort," "acquired in another place," and "not acquired at all") for the second interview session in order to obtain information about the values that the participants acquired in Project Effort and other places.

Two steps were used during the collection of card sort data. First, the deck of cards were shuffled before each interview so that cards were in random order. Second, the participants received the cards prepared from the researcher and were asked to classify each of the cards according to the categories that were on a table in front of them.

Two interviews were conducted for each participant. The first interview session was divided in two parts. In the first part, the researcher obtained information about the participants' perceptions of their life experiences after participating in Project Effort (Events). The participants were asked to elaborate on their most significant events, their experiences, and the challenges that they have confronted after culminating their participation in Project Effort. The purpose of the second part of the interview was to obtain information about the importance that TPSR values are in the participants' lives (prescription–identity link). The card sort procedure was used to obtain this information. Follow up questions were asked on how they have applied these TPSR values in their lives.

The second interview focused on where and how the participants acquired the TPSR values and if they were applied in their lives. Participants' responses determined either the prescription–event or identity–event link. This information about where and how they acquired the values were also obtained through the card-sort activity. Follow-up questions were asked that concentrated on how the participants have applied what they have learned in the program into their lives.

The order of the interview was purposely selected by the investigator to avoid influencing the responses of the participants with previous questions. The first session of the interview did not focus on the participants' perceptions of Project Effort (prescription) for two reasons. The first was to avoid influencing the participants with questions related to prescription when they were answering identity questions (i.e. involvement in Project Effort). The second reason was that it allowed the researcher to see if their identity and prescription were aligned (prescription–identity link).

The member check procedure consisted of two phases. The first phase was for participants to read the written transcript of both interviews and verify that the transcription was accurate. The second phase was used to clarify any doubt that the researcher had in relation to participants' conceptual responses in both of the interviews.

Data Analysis

Yin (2009) explains that analyzing data in case studies "depends on an investigator's own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations" (p. 127). All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Data analysis was conducted with another external investigator in order to increase the reliability of the study. All of the data analysis procedures were discussed with the external investigator before analyzing the data. In addition, extensive discussions were encouraged if there were differences between the investigators when coding the data. The purpose of the discussion was to reach an agreement on the interpretation of the data.

To analyze the data, an a priori coding system was used in this study. This system allowed the researcher to establish three categories based on each TMR linkage to accommodate the analytical units. Reading the data and writing down initial interpretations were the first steps in the data analysis procedure. This process focused on understanding the participants' intentions and meaning rather than coding. The second step consisted of revisiting the research questions. It allowed the investigators to refresh their minds about the lens that should be used when coding the data. The third step consisted of coding the data. During the coding process, the researcher read and re-read the data and divided it into meaningful analytics units. The process ended when there were no more analytic units to identify. Then, the researcher assigned a category to the analytics units that were identified during the coding process based on the three TMR linkages. Pattern matching was used to move from coding to interpretation. This step was used to analyze the data once it had been segregated into each of the three categories (Yin, 2009). Pattern matching allowed the investigators to analyze and compare data with the research questions. In the case of this study, data were analyzed and compared with the TMR elements and linkages.

Findings

Importance of TPSR Values on Participants' Lives (Prescription-Identity Link)

The purpose of the first research question was to describe the level of importance that TPSR values had on participants' lives. *Respect*, *effort, self-direction*, and *helping others* were identified most often as TPSR values that were really important to the participants' lives (see Table 1). The prescription-identity link becomes well defined here. That is, the participants' identity in terms of these four TPSR values is aligned with the philosophy and experiences provided by Project Effort.

In relation to *respect*, the main explanation among the participants was that respect was important because if they wanted to be respected, they needed to respect others first. It demonstrates that the participants awaited respect, and that to receive it, they needed to show respect first. This type of message was constantly reinforced in Project Effort.

Table 1. Importance of TPSR Values on Participants' Lives

TPSR Values	Really Important	Kind of Important	Not Important
Accepting others	2	3	0
Respect	5	0	0
Effort	5	0	0
Self direction	5	0	0
Helping others	5	0	0
Caring	3	2	0
Leadership	3	2	0

Background experiences may also explain why the participants perceived respect as something really important to their lives. It is important to remember that some of Project Effort's participants came from backgrounds where there was a lot of violence and a lack of respect. For example, Duke and Bob told that they have been disrespected because of theirrace, and Elizabeth mentioned that she and her family were persecuted by the Vietnam government because of their religious belief. It would seem that past experiences may have played a huge role in considering the value of respect as very important--they want to be treated the same way other people are treated when it comes to respect.

Inner-city culture may also explain why participants perceived respect as something really important to their lives. All the participants of this study resided in inner-city areas at some point in their lives. Respect is often interpreted differently among inner-city youth. Hemmings (2003) explained that inner-city youth perceive respect as a something important for surviving in the streets and school. She also explained that in order to survive in their environment, respect becomes the tool to gain personal authority over others, social status, self-esteem, and some kind of protection. However, this interpretation of respect is different to the interpretation that Project Effort tries to impart. Project Effort tries to encourage participants to abandon their "street formed" perception of respect by promoting concepts such as respecting the feelings and rights of others, practicing self-control, including everyone in the activities, and solving conflicts in a peaceful way. Elizabeth described how the value of respect was centerpiece of discussion during the group sessions:

> *Doc (referring to the program leader) taught us to be respectful to the kids. If you are disrespectful to them they will do the same thing to you. But if you want them to respect you, you have to respect them first and show them that you respect them and that you want the same thing from them.*

Gino also felt there was a "pay back in respecting others. He classified the value of respect for only one reason—to gain respect from others.

> *Because you treat people the way you want to be treated. So I try to give respect so can get respect back*

Effort was another of the TPSR values that was really important to the lives of the participants. The main theme among most of the participants was that with effort you can accomplish things in life. Given the environment in which most of them live, accessing resources is a challenge. Therefore, effort can be considered a surviving skill. This was shown in Tamika's effort to take care of her family. She showed effort by waking up at 5:00 in the morning to prepare her children for school, working 60 hours on a weekly basis, coming home after work to take care of her children, and studying to finish her college degree. Tamika summed up the importance of trying your best this way:

> *Because it takes effort to make anything work. To me you got to have the effort or the will to do it. I mean without effort there is nothing. You won't make it otherwise and things just get worse.*

Duke also found that the effort was a key factor in succeeding in her college classes. For example, she did well in her math course because she went several times to speak with her professor, did all her homework, and was always on time to class.

> *Ok, I was recruited to UNCW for a track scholarship. When I got there I really didn't like the program or what was going on and there were other things outside—so I quit. So, these student loans in my name and it was either come home work at Wal-Mart or put a hundred percent effort in college and that's what I chose to do. And it paid off.*

Although *self-direction* was perceived as really important by the participants, their reasons were different from one another. Some of the participants (i.e. Bob, Gino) associated self-direction with the importance of not relying on other people to do things. For example, Bob talked about *self-direction* as not being a follower, not relying on other people to do things, and self-motivation. Of this he said:

> *Like I said, I'm a leader and I don't like to be commanded by anyone. I try my best to self-direct myself, so I don't have to rely on anybody to do it for me. I'm a self-motivator, I motivate myself.*

The rest of the participants (i.e., Duke, Tamika, and Elizabeth) viewed self-direction as having a sense of control over their lives. Duke felt that being self-directed was important because you can control where you are headed. Also, she felt that the future will not be promising if a person does not have control of his or her life:

> *Self-direction is important to me because I have control of where I am going and nobody can drive my ship. Therefore, if that is not important then I don't have anything to live forward to. It's kind of like going with the flow. And, I can't afford to just go with the flow.*

Both rationales have connotations of autonomy and independence, which is similar to the message embedded in the TPSR model. The TPSR model focuses on individual's ability to work independently, to set and work on personal goals, and to have the courage to make personal choices that may not meet the approval of their peers (Hellison et al., 2000).

This perception of not relying on other people and having a sense of control of their lives is something that may have developed based on the circumstances where the participants were raised. Let us look for a moment at Bob's case; Bob was forced to take care of himself after graduating from high school because he did not have family support. To take care of himself he decided to work in two jobs at the same time. The main point here is that participants may

perceive self-direction as really important because they might see it as a surviving skill that is very useful to their lives.

Helping others was the other TPSR value that participants perceived as very important. Their rationale was based on the idea that everybody needs help at some point in their lives. A strong argument can be made that participants are more willing to help when they sense that somebody is in need. This argument is supported by Barnet's (2001) research which showed that most youth will help other people when they are faced with various types of struggles. Most of the participants had it rough during their childhood and adolescent years. Therefore, they may have prioritize the value of helping others as something really important because they can identify themselves with people who have faced similar circumstances. Gino, who joined Project Effort when he was 13 believes that if you help people they might help you back in the future:

> *People will have your back if you had their back just because you helped them out. You never know in the long run it might come back and benefit you. If I show that I care and if you give me an inch of trust, I can begin to build a mountain of trust.*

Country and socio economic status also plays a role here. Families of the participants of this study struggle with their economic situation and some of the families, like the family of Bob and Elizabeth, come from others countries, which makes it harder to function in this society. Helping others is a way for the participants' family to survive and function in the mainstream of western culture (Buckley, Thorngren, & Kleist, 1997). This is a characteristic of resilient families. Buckley et al. (1997) explained that resilient families, especially underserved, tend to support each other emotionally and economically. For example, Bob helps his brother financially by allowing him to stay in his apartment without paying rent. Also, Duke took a second job to help her mother when she lost her job.

Influence of Project Effort in Participants' Lives (Prescription-Event Link)

The analysis also examined how former participants' perceptions of Project Effort experiences guided the way that they have lived their lives--the second research question? The findings were organized in three ways: a) TPSR values acquired in Project Effort, b) methods of learning TPSR values, and c) TPSR values that have been useful in different contexts of the participants' lives.

TPSR values acquired in Project Effort. To understand how Project Effort has guided the lives of the participants it is important to know what TPSR values they acquired in the program. Table 2 presents the TPSR values that were learned by the participants in Project Effort. As can be seen in Table 2, Project Effort was very influential in teaching participants the TPSR values of *helping others and leadership*. Gino indicated that he learned to help others by working with other leaders in teaching kids. Gino mentioned that Project Effort taught him to be a leader using three strategies. The first one was that Project Effort gave him responsibilities that he needed to accomplish. For example, one of the responsibilities that he mentioned was preparing a lesson plan for the following week. The second strategy was to have opportunities to be in front of kids and lead activities:

> *They taught everybody to be a leader; to be able to stand up. I guess they teach you to be a leader by giving everyone a chance to lead different activities.*

Another strategy was through personal reflection. His was a process that was routinely done after each leadership session. Leaders were guided by staff assistants in evaluating their experience with the kids. This was very important to their growth as a youth leader. Duke described this process as a way of seeing if goals were met:

> *We would have to go back and rate ourselves on how we did on the different goals we had planned out for ourselves. And, like I said, the mentors (staff assistants) pointed out different things that we might have been good at or different things that we didn't do good.*

Table 2. TPSR Values Learned in Project Effort

TPSR Values	Bob	Gino	Elizabeth	Duke	Tamika	Total
Accepting others	X			X		2
Respect			X*			1
Effort		X		X	X	3
Self-Direction			X*	X		2
Helping Others	X	X	X*		X*	4
Caring					X	1
Leadership	X	X	X*	X		4

*Acquired by other sources and in Project Effort

Interestingly, responses showed that Project Effort was not that influential in teaching the values of *respect* and *caring*. These findings are surprising due to the fact that Project Effort staff is constantly promoting these two values. This also means that the importance that respect has in their lives probably came from other sources not related to the program. These findings raise uncertainty of other TPSR research in regard to whether participants acquired the values of respect and caring in TPSR programs. There is a possibility that participants in previous studies (and this one) acquired the values prior to their participation and that they were reinforced in the programs.

Methods of learning TPSR values. Part of the data analysis included the ways that the TPSR values were learned in Project Effort. They indicated that they learned most of the TPSR values through an experiential approach. That is, they learned it by doing things related to the TPSR values. Dewey (1938) defines the experiential approach as "learning by doing." Dewey also added that learning occurs when the education is grounded in experience. *Helping others* and *leadership* were the two TPSR values that were mainly learned through an experiential approach. In regard to *helping others*, the majority of the participants stated that they acquired the concept of helping others when they were working with kids and helping them to do the activities. Another way that Project Effort taught this value was by having youth leaders host a shelter for single mother families. The TPSR value of *leadership* was learned by the participants because Project Effort provided them opportunities to be in front of kids and lead activities.

Participants also indicated that they learned some of the TPSR values by listening to the program staff talk about the TPSR values. Hearing this allowed individuals to process the information, construct meaning, and respond to the messages (Emmert, 1994). This approach was especially effective in teaching the TPSR value of *effort*. All three participants (Dino, Duke, and Tamika) that acquired the TPSR value of effort in Project Effort indicated that the main message given by the staff was to keep on trying new things. This was accomplished by creating activities which would promote these ideals and have the children step out of their

comfort zone. When they would become discouraged or frustrated they would be positively reinforced by the program staff.

Observational learning was another approach in which participants learned some of the TPSR values. This approach is defined as the ability to learn to perform an action by seeing it done (Torriero, Oliveri, Koch, Caltagirone, & Petrosini, 2007, p. 1656). Participants indicated that they learned some of the TPSR values by observing the behavior of the staff. For example, one of the participants (Tamika) said that she learned to be *caring* by observing how the staff cared about her.

TPSR values that have been useful in different contexts of participants' lives. To understand how Project Effort has guided the lives of the participants, it is important to know how they have applied the TPSR values in their lives.

Helping others was clearly a TPSR value acquired in Project Effort that has been the most useful to the participants. All four of the participants (i.e., Bob, Gino, Elizabeth, Tamika) that acquired the TPSR value of helping others have applied it in their relationship with family and friends. Bob said that he helps his brother by letting him stay in his apartment without paying rent or any of the bills. He also mentioned that helping others has been a part of what he does in schools:

> *If you are struggling in school, I might try to help you. Or if they see me they try to help me with the class. We try to stay together. I will always keep my eye out to see if someone is having trouble with something--school work, friends.*

Also, helping others has been useful at work for Elizabeth and Tamika. Both of them said that they have helped their co-workers. Elizabeth mentioned that when her co-workers are busy, she helped them to set tables and take orders (she works at a restaurant). Only one participant (i.e., Gino) identified the TPSR value of helping others as useful in college. Gino mentioned that he tries to help his peers when they are struggling with a class.

Leadership was another most influential TPSR value acquired in Project Effort. Elizabeth and Duke mentioned that they have been leaders to their family and friends. Elizabeth explained that she has been a leader by being a role model, helping, and giving advice to her siblings. She also sees the importance of leadership and caring for others at her part-time work place. She indicated that she makes sure that everything is ready and that everyone is doing what they are supposed to:

> *I like being a leader because I like to make sure that things are ready and things are going smooth and well without having any problems and that's what I like. In the morning that we have to get the tables set up and food and make sure that everyone is doing what they are supposed to be doing, and also make sure that everything is there when we need them.*

While Duke considers that she has been a leader to her friends by graduating from college and showing them that it can be done only one participant (i.e. Gino) identified the TPSR value of leadership as useful to his college experience. Gino indicated that he assumes a leadership role when he has to work in groups with peers. Bob associates leadership with not being a follower, not relying on other people to do things, and self-motivation. He explained it this way:

> *Like I said, I'm a leader and I don't like to be commanded by anyone. I try my best to self-direct myself, so I don't have to rely on anybody to do it for me. I'm a self-motivator, I motivate myself.*

Based on these findings, it would appear that Project Effort has effectively made the participants aware of the importance of leading and helping others, but most importantly, has made them aware of the importance of applying them in life.

Other Influences in Participants' Lives (Identity-Event Link)

The third research question was: How have the TPSR values acquired through other sources guided participants' lives? The findings are presented in the following sections: a) TPSR values acquired through other sources; and b) TPSR values learned through other sources that have been useful to participants' lives.

TPSR values acquired through other sources. The identity-event link of the TMR model allowed for the identification of other factors not related to the program that have guided the lives of the participants. To understand how the participants' identity in terms of values has guided their lives, it is important to know what TPSR values they acquired in their environment. Table 3 summarizes the TPSR values and the outside sources from which they were acquired.

Table 3. TPSR Values From Other Sources

TPSR Values	Family	School	Religion	Culture	By Themselves	Sport	Total
Accepting others	Elizabeth/ Tamika	Gino					3
Respect	Gino/Duke/ Elizabeth*	Gino	Bob	Elizabeth*			5
Effort	Elizabeth				Bob		2
Self-Direction	Elizabeth*	Gino			Bob/Tamika		4
Helping Others	Elizabeth*/ Duke	Tamika*					3
Caring	Bob/ Elizabeth/ Duke	Gino					4
Leadership	Elizabeth*	Tamika					2

*Acquired by other sources and in Project Effort

While Project Effort emphasizes the importance of *accepting others* there was evidence indicating that for some of the participants family played a role in acquiring this value (i.e., Tamika, Elizabeth). In Tamika's case the dysfunction character of her family hadhelped her learn to accept the fact that her mother was a drunk and came from a dysfunctional family:

> *Because I have to accept a lot of things that I did not want to. Who wants to accept that your mother is a drunk. Nobody wants to accept that but you have to. Even with my family, I got one of the most dysfunctional families in the world. I really believe that but you accept them because everybody is different.*

It was also clear that *respect* came from a number of sources (i.e., Family, School, Religion, & Culture). Previous research has shown that these sources offer viable experiences that influence behaviors, attitude, and expectations for social and moral behavior. They are often associated with adolescents' endorsement of life values (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). In relation to *respect,* three of the four participants (i.e. Duke, Gino, and Elizabeth) acquired the

concept because their parents were always reinforcing verbally the importance of respecting people. Duke described the lesson taught by her mom:

> *From my mom. I mean growing up as a kid that was just one of the manners she told me. She told me to always be respectful and treat others how you want to be treated. And then as I got older I just learned more ways to be respectful as far as yes ma'am, no ma'am, yes sir, no sir, and I understand certain ways, like I was telling, you respect is a universal language. It's started at childhood.*

For Elizabeth, her cultural roots also served as resource for acquiring the idea of respect for others. For example, she commented on how the value of respect was learned from her native country Viet Nam. Elizabeth explained:

> *In Vietnam you have to respect older people and your parents. Parents are required to teach their children to respect their elders, themselves, and everyone else.*

Bob's notion of respect for others came from a different source--one that was unique from the others. He learned this value through religious teachings during childhood. Bob described how this happen:

> *I went an Arabic school in my early age education. Respecting others was one of the main concepts being taught. That's one of the focuses of the Muslim religion. The main things that is stressed is to respect yourself and others.*

Previous research has demonstrated that school can also be a powerful socializing agent in which students acquire values (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004; Maitless, 2010; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). For example, Maitless (2010) examined the impact of a citizenship program in a Scotland secondary school. He found that students show improvement on accepting people with same sex preference and also became more personally responsible for challenging racism. These past findings fall well in line with the present study's outcomes where the school environment was another main source in which participants learned various TPSR values. For example, school was the main place where Gino learned the values of *caring, accepting others,* and *respect*. He stated:

> *My teachers were always emphasizing to us to be respectful toward other people, and to be caring by helping and not making fun of others.*

For Tamika, school setting and self-discovery served to foster her sense of *self-direction*. With little help from the family, she had found ways to take care of herself (improving her education, getting out of the projects—public housing, and having a job), but most importantly, she has learned to take care of her children. Tamika also became more self-directed through guidance of her school counselor. This started her freshman year in high school:

> *I was going to quit school, I hated it, I was not passing, I had a hard time. So, we [referring to her and the counselor] had to sit down and we just made a plan for the 9th grade year of things that I need to do. One thing was coming to school; I need you to plan to go to school as much as possible. I need you to plan to come to school, and when you come to school I need you to have the books and with the books I want you to do the home works. So I think we kind of just worked it out because it was the hardest year.*

Other sources not related to Project Effort were also very influential in teaching the participants the TPSR values of *respect* and *caring*. These two values were mainly learned within the family context. The majority of the participants (i.e. Duke, Elizabeth, Bob)

mentioned that their parents were a big factor in forming their attitude of respecting and caring for others. In the case of Duke and Elizabeth, they learned both by observing how their parents cared for other people. Elizabeth frequently learned from her parents actions toward others:

> *Yes and also being with my parents…you see them help people. If someone needs help, they will help them with what they have. Seeing them do that you kind of want to do the same thing too because your parents are doing it.*

In sum, the above findings are aligned with the developmental system theories that explain that the development of an individual can be altered by multiples factors or elements in the ecology (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These findings show that there were different sources (e.g. family, school, religion, culture, sport) besides Project Effort that were very influential in acquiring the TPSR values in the lives of the participants in terms of acquiring TPSR values.

TPSR values learned through other sources that have been useful to the participants' lives. Analysis also examined the application of TPSR values acquired through other sources to understand how they have guided their lives. Table 4 shows the other sources from the values were acquired by the participants.

Table 4. TPSR Values Acquired Outside Project Effort that Have Been Useful in Different Contexts of the Participants' Lives

TPSR Values	College	Work	Family and Friends
Accepting others	Gino/Elizabeth		Tamika
Respect	Gino/Duke	Bob/Duke/Tamika	Bob/Gino/Elizabeth*/Duke/ Tamika
Effort	Gino/Duke	Tamika	
Self-Direction	Gino/Elizabeth*	Bob	Gino/Tamika
Helping others		Duke	Elizabeth*/Duke/Tamika
Caring			Bob/Gino/Elizabeth/Duke
Leadership			Elizabeth*

*Acquired by other sources and in Project Effort

Respect and *caring* are the TPSR values acquired outside Project Effort that have been the most useful to the participants. All five of the participants have embraced the value of respect in their relationship with family and friends. They reported that they showed respect to their family and friends by listening and not interrupting when they were talking, acknowledging their presence, and resolving conflict privately and not in front of people. Respect was also useful in their work environment. For example, Tamika and Duke demonstrate respect at work by letting things go and not arguing back with their co-workers when things did not go their way. However, respect has been useful to Gino and Duke in their college career. Both of them made certain to be respectful to their professors. Gino's "rule of thumb" was that if a peer or professor is talking in a class he would listen and not interrupt.

Four of the participants (i.e., Bob, Gino, Elizabeth, and Duke) indicated that caring had been useful in their relationship with their families. They showed that they care by helping family members, giving advice, listening to their problems, being supportive, and encouraging them.

It would appear that participants' families have made the participants aware of the importance of caring for others, but most importantly, have made them aware of the importance of applying it within the family context.

It was indicated earlier that self-direction was the most beneficial TPSR value acquired outside Project Effort by the participants. Gino and Tamika said that they have been self-directed within their family context. Recall that Tamika has continually taken care of her children as well as living without aid from her parents. Similarly, Gino has made some decisions that have been against his father's preference. For example, his father wanted Gino to study computer engineering in college but he decided to major in agriculture education. Both Gino and Elizabeth also indicated that they do not to rely on other people to do college work. Gino described how this happened in his college class:

> *I was in a class and one time we had a project. They assign groups and none of my group manages to meet up. So I just took matters into my hands and did the project on my own. Got a good grade on it.*

Being self-directed also has been useful to Bob in his real estate job. He indicated that that he does most of the work by himself. Some of the things that he has to do by himself are to identify a house, get an appraisal, assess the property, and submit offers.

Implications of the TMR Linkages

The intent of this study was to develop an understanding of how the Project Effort experiences have guided former Project Effort participants' lives. This phenomenon was investigated through the lens of the Triangle Model of Responsibility (Schlenker et al., 1994). The Triangle Model of Responsibility (TMR) consists of three linkages, and they were used to describe the extent that Project Effort had guided the lives of former participants. Prescription-identity was one of the linkages, and refers to the extent to which the individuals' values were aligned with the experiences provided by Project Effort. The prescription-event link relates to the extent in which the individuals' perceptions of Project Effort experiences have guided their lives. And, the identity–event link refers to how important TPSR values learned outside Project Effort have guided participants' lives.

Prescription–Identity Link

Based on Schlenker et al.'s (1994) explanation, the importance of this link is to see if the prescription is perceived to be important to the individual. The findings of this study showed that participants perceived all the TPSR values and life skills as something really important or kind of important to their lives. That is, the TPSR model had relevancy for them. The findings have implications for sustaining youth development programs. Having a relevant curriculum could explain why the participants continued to participate in Project Effort for a prolonged period of time. Sustained participation by its members translates into greater exposure to those experiences that reflect program goals—such as helping and leading others. Indeed, Hellison (2011) advocates for longer exposure to relevant content so that members are more likely to apply the values in their lives.

Prescription–Event Link

The findings of this study related to the prescription-event linkage showed that there were some TPSR values learned in Project Effort that were useful to the participants. Schlenker et al. (1994) explained that for this link to be considered strong, the set of prescriptions have to be applied to an event and should govern conduct. Having a strong link is important because it indicates that Project Effort was influential. In this study, the TPSR values of *helping*

others and *leadership* were the most beneficial and influential to the lives of the participants. These concepts made the prescription-event link stronger.

It is important for youth development programs to understand the importance of the prescription-event link for two reasons. First, it allows people to determine the impact that the youth development program has on the lives of the participants (Lerner, 2006). The ultimate goal of the TPSR model is for participants to apply the concepts beyond the program (Hellison, 2011). This TMR link proved to be quite viable in that the participants appeared to be able to apply the concepts taught in the program. The prescription-event link showed that participants learned the concepts of helping and leading others in Project Effort and that those concepts have guided the way they live their lives. These findings are important because they affirm one of the main goals of Project Effort. That is, they show how the program develops competent individuals that have the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in their environment. This, in turn, equips them to be contributors to their community. These are some of the main principles underlying effective youth development programming (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

An important implication for future studies is offered here. Continued research is needed to explore why certain values were more salient than others. In this study, for example, Project Effort was not as influential in teaching the values of respect and caring. Exploring strategies, along with their character and fidelity would serve to provide valuable insights on how program directors could maximize the effectiveness of teaching these concepts.

Project Effort used different strategies such as empowerment, choices, direct teaching, and role modeling to teach values. Youth development curriculum developers have to understand that these strategies can be effective with students with variable need and dispositions, thus addressing the individuality of kids (Hellison, 2011). For three participants in this study (i.e., Bob, Gino, and Elizabeth), the concept of leadership was learned through an experiential approach (empowerment) while one (i.e. Duke) learned it by having the leader be more direct with her. Duke explained that her mentors talked to her about the importance of being a positive leader within a group. Youth development program planners and teachers must embrace different ways in which they can teach the same concept. By doing that, they are respecting one of the characteristics of youth development programming, which is to provide kids with different alternatives that take into consideration their development, context, and environment (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004). On the other hand, youth development programs that do not provide a multi-method approach will find it difficult to impact some children because of the individuality and uniqueness of each member (Lerner, 2006).

The importance of staff training comes into play here. Given that most of the TPSR values were learned through a number of strategies/experiences it is important that staff members learn how to effectively use them. This will insure that the program goals and objectives are met. Also, the staff should be made aware of the influence that their behavior has on their members. A few of the participants (i.e. Duke, Tamika, Elizabeth) in this study mentioned that they were able to learn some of the values by observing. For example, Elizabeth mentioned that she learned to communicate by watching the different communication skills of the program director when talking to other people. This means that staff should be continually aware of their behavior (verbal and nonverbal) at all times. This could be insured by making staff reflect on their behaviors after they work with kids. This would allow staff to be constantly thinking and reflecting on their own behaviors. Another way is to incorporate peer feedback during and after working with kids. This would permit giving feedback to the leader from different perspectives.

Identity–Event Link

The identity-event link was modified to meet the purpose of this study. The original identity-event link proposed by Schlenker et al. (1994) did not give the flexibility to describe how other sources guided participants' lives. Therefore, it was modified to see how important TPSR values learned outside Project Effort have guided the lives of former participants. The identity-event link was important because it allowed seeing the role that the environment played in the participants' lives in terms of learning, and applying values. By doing this, it is possible to take into consideration external sources that become part of evaluation process. This has been a significant issue in program evaluation since the majority of evaluations in youth development have ignored the role that the environment plays in the lives of the individuals (Patton 2002).

The finding of this study related to this linkage showed that there were some TPSR values learned outside Project Effort that were useful to the participants. The TPSR value of *respect* and *caring*, along with *self-direction* were the most beneficial and influential to them. Most of the values were mainly learned within the family and school contexts. These findings support the development systems theories that claim that the development of an individual is altered by multiples factors (Lerner, 2006). Implications for youth development program planning come into play here.. Youth development programs should take into consideration external sources that support program efficacy and methods that work in teaching the concepts that the program strives to develop. Both sources and teaching methods should be interfaced with the program content and context. This would help to fortify the efforts of program leaders in being more effective in teaching the goals of the program.

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