

**HIV prevention
and participatory program
strategies for youth:
Are voice, choice, decision-
making, and opportunities for
personal development linked
to risk reduction practices?**

**Abstract #155680
2007 American Public Health Association
Meeting
Washington, DC**

Acknowledgments

Safe Horizon, Bronx AIDS Services,
Citizens Advice Bureau, Project Reach Youth,
New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute
Adolescent HIV Prevention Services Unit,
Cornell University Family Life Development Center

Youth involved in pilot study – spring 2006

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Background

- HIV prevention programs often use participatory strategies, including active engagement of youth in decision-making.
- Measures of active program participation are generally used to assess/evaluate program processes rather than specific health-related impacts.
- Our study examined program participation in relation to HIV risk reduction practices.

Youth in New York State: Too many becoming infected with HIV, too few accessing care

Estimated number of new infections each year in people aged <25 in New York State	3,600 US total: 40,000 NYS share: 18% Percentage in youth: 50%
<i>New HIV/AIDS diagnoses reported during 2004 in people aged <25 in NYS</i>	716 <i>(includes 34 diagnoses in children <13)</i>
<i>Percentage of estimated number of new HIV infections in people aged <25 in NYS that are diagnosed</i>	20% (one in five)
<i>Estimated number of new infections not diagnosed if projections are accurate</i>	2,884

Methods

- Drafted an eight item scale regarding young people's influence/voice within programs and program-generated opportunities for personal development
- Piloted the scale with 98 youth involved in four state-funded adolescent HIV prevention programs
- The scale was well received and viewed as valid by youth involved in the study.

Items included in scale

- Adults in the program listen to what I have to say.
- I help decide things like program activities or rules.
- I feel I have a lot of voice/power to influence decisions about the program.
- I am very involved in program activities.
- The program's activities are challenging and interesting.
- I learn a lot from participating in the program.
- I think that participating in the program will help me to get a job.
- I think that participating in the program will help me to continue my education.

(Response scale: 1 = strongly agree...5 = strongly disagree)

Evaluation of the scale

- Confirmatory factor analysis
- Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha was 0.86 for the overall sample, and ranged between 0.73 and 0.91 when sub-samples from the four programs were analyzed separately)
- Assessment of construct validity (inter-item correlations: 0.34 - 0.73; item-total correlations: 0.54 - 0.69)
- Youth-Adult data interpretation meetings

Results

Active program participation correlated with

- Reported sexual risk reduction practices during the past year ($r = 0.34, p = .001$)

- Reported sexual risk reduction practices during the past three months ($r = 0.30, p = .004$)

- A summary scale of sexual and drug related risk reduction practices ($r = 0.24, p = .031$)

Relationship of quality of participation with past year risk reduction practices [observed/(expected)]

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Risk reduction</i>	<i>High participation</i>	<i>Low participation</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	No sex or consistent condom use	7 (5.8)	8 (9.2)	15
	Inconsistent condom use (0 – 75%)	3 (4.2)	8 (6.8)	11
Female	No sex or consistent condom use	26 (21.7)	16 (20.3)	42
	Inconsistent condom use (0 – 75%)	6 (10.3)	14 (9.7)	20
Total		42	46	88

Relationship of quality of participation with past year risk reduction practices [observed/(expected)]

<i>Age</i>	<i>Risk reduction</i>	<i>High participation</i>	<i>Low participation</i>	<i>Total</i>
13-15	No sex or consistent condom use	15 (15)	15 (15)	30
13-15	Inconsistent condom use (0 – 75%)	0	0	0
16-17	No sex or consistent condom use	10 (8.5)	7 (8.5)	17
16-17	Inconsistent condom use (0 – 75%)	4 (5.5)	7 (5.5)	11
18-24	No sex or consistent condom use	7 (4.3)	3 (5.7)	10
18-24	Inconsistent condom use (0 – 75%)	6 (8.7)	14 (11.3)	20
Total		42	46	88

Conclusions

- Higher levels of participation correlated with less risk taking.
- The scale measuring active participation was reliable and easily administered.
- Longitudinal study is needed to demonstrate causal relationships between active participation and HIV risk reduction.
- Nonetheless, our pilot study data suggests that highly participatory programs hold potential to enhance young people's capacity to practice safer behaviors.

Next steps

- Larger exploratory study supported by the National Institute of Nursing Research (1R21NR9764-01A1)
- Baseline, 6-month and 12-month surveys of 300 13-17 year olds in 8 NYC programs
- Scales addressing program climate, mesosystems, intensity and duration of involvement combined with participation scale to generate global scale measuring program participation characteristics

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