THE DILEMMAS YOUTH WORKERS FACE REGARDING
FAMILIES OF PARTICIPANTS

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this qualitative study was to gain preliminary knowledge of the nature of youth workers' dilemmas involving families and the underlying issues they entail. This study used grounded theory methods of analysis to explore the dilemmas youth workers face regarding families of participants in twelve high quality youth programs serving high school aged youth. The two questions explored were: What categories of dilemmas do youth workers face regarding families? What considerations do youth workers have when faced with such dilemmas? Four dilemma categories with distinct considerations were identified that specifically focused on the parents of participants. The dilemmas youth workers faced included being concerned about a participant with family problems, having the parent of a participant make demands on the program, having a parent not support their child's participation, and needing to share information with parents. This study suggests that effective youth workers engage in a reflective process as well as a strategic balancing of interests to best serve youth when such dilemmas arose.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Youth workers face diverse and complicated dilemmas of practice as they work with adolescents in out-of-school time settings (Larson & Walker, 2010). A dilemma is a situation that has no clear cut response and requires practitioners to contemplate complex or competing issues including those that are developmental, pragmatic, and ethical (Banks, 1999; Larson & Walker, 2010). The way in which youth workers interpret, consider, and respond to such dilemmas can shape youth's experiences in programs. Although research has discussed the various types of dilemmas that youth workers face (Larson & Walker, 2010; Walker & Larson, 2006), specifically exploring dilemmas involving families of participants is useful because of the important role family plays in the lives of adolescents that programs are serving.

The objective of this research project is to gain preliminary knowledge of the nature of youth workers' dilemmas involving families and the underlying issues they entail. The study is focused on the considerations of competent youth workers when facing such dilemmas. These considerations may give insight into the processes that unfold at times the program and family intersect. Methods of grounded theory analysis were used to understand the perspective of youth workers when faced with family dilemmas. The focus of this research project is to explore how youth workers *understand* dilemmas regarding families of participants.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Dilemmas in Youth Worker Competencies

Research on dilemmas can inform the larger effort in the youth development field to conceptualize what makes a skillful youth worker. This study assumes that skillful youth workers are found in high quality positive youth development programs. Eccles & Gootman (2002), in a text cited more than 600 times, have identified critical features of positive youth developmental settings to be: 'physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts' (p.90-91). Features of high quality programs linked to positive youth outcomes include high levels of youth engagement, an "active learning approach," positive relationships between youth and staff, and a "positive emotional climate and peer interactions" (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010, p.351-352). Youth participation in high quality programs has been linked to cognitive and social development (Miller, 2003; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2009); improved self-efficacy (Catalano, Benglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004); access to social capital (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005); and long term educational achievement, civic engagement, and psychological adjustment (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009; Scales, Benson, & Mannes, 2006). A high quality program is likely to have a positive impact on youth, and at the center of high quality programming are skillful youth workers.

Skillful or effective youth workers can be described as having youth worker competencies. Competencies are "the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes workers need to create and support positive youth development settings" (Astroth, Garza, & Taylor, 2004, p. 27). Organizations throughout the United States use knowledge of competencies to evaluate what makes a successful youth worker (Astroth et al.; National Youth Development Learning Network, 2003; Yohalem, 2003). Such organizations often describe competencies as specific skills. Skills outlined include integrating theories of human, child, and youth development; acting in a professional manner by being ethical, responsible, and recognizing boundaries; and fostering engagement of youth through program content through delivery methods that incorporate youth participation (Anderson, 2010; National Youth Development Learning Network, 2004; Youth Community Connections, 2008). Most competencies, such as these, use verbs or actions that *imply* a process that a person is able to foster. This makes sense because youth outcomes are likely to be produced through processes, particularly the processes that youth workers facilitate, specific actions they engage in, or roles that they play (Messias, Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina, 2005). However, competencies are

generally *discussed* or conceptualized as static characteristics of youth workers without discussing the processes that create such characteristics. The actual processes in context are rarely examined. Introducing dilemmas into the discussion of competencies could provide information to highlight the *processes* that competent youth workers engage in when faced with challenging situations that arise.

Exploring dilemmas regarding families of participants can enhance discussion of youth worker competencies because it can provide insight into competencies or skills put into action. Lists of competencies that mention families often do not discuss skills used or processes engaged in when dilemmas regarding families occur (Anderson, 2010; Youth Community Connections, 2008; National Youth Development Learning Network, 2004). For example, the National Collaboration for Youth described the competency of the youth worker, "cares for and involves family," by stating the following:

- Understands and cares about youth and their families
- Actively engages family members in program and community initiatives
- Understands the greater community context in which youth and families live
- Communicates effectively with youth and their families—in one-to-one communications as well as in group settings (Astroth et al., 2004, p. 31).

These are the characteristics of a youth worker with the competency of caring for families. It is likely that youth workers with this competency undergo a process of thinking through family dilemmas that arise *before* responding. For example, when a youth worker who cares for families has a parent discourage their child from participating in the program, how does the dilemma unfold and what issues does the youth worker consider? Exploring the nature of dilemmas and the importance of the family is useful to providing a context for how competent, skilled youth workers perceive dilemmas involving the families of participants.

<div align="center">Dilemmas and Considerations</div>

Youth workers face dilemmas, analyze dilemmas, and then contemplate considerations related to such dilemmas. Youth work has been described as: "a kinetic tumble of events" (Larson, Rickman, Gibbons, & Walker, 2009) and as 'a modern dance choreographed, yet modified during performance because of dancers' interactions' (Krueger, 2005). These analogies illustrate how the youth workers who make and implement plans for youth programs are bound to face dilemma situations because of unplanned events and interactions. Krueger described a dilemma situation he faced:

John is having a fun game of 1-on-1 basketball with Mark Krueger (the youth worker), they

argue over the score, suddenly John curses out Mark, storms out of the gym, informs Mark as

he sits beside John that "you always have to win," soon resumes the game with Mark who is

now being less competitive, "slams the ball against the wall," and yells "Don't *let* me win!"

(Krueger, 2005, pp. 24-25).

Beth faced a challenging dilemma situation as well:

Beth noticed that since she hired the new choreographer with a professional background, the

kids were not enjoying the theater group. The choreographer was efficient and talented but

was creating a less democratic space than Beth had, and this was upsetting the youth.

However, Beth felt a "professional obligation to give the choreographer a chance" (Walker &

Larson, 2006, pp.114).

Like all dilemma situations, the situations Mark and Beth faced presented dilemmas of practice that

have no clear cut or prescribed response (Banks, 1999).

Youth workers often analyze a dilemma of practice before responding to one. They begin by

appraising a dilemma situation (Larson et al., 2009). Appraising a dilemma refers to the act of using

one's expertise and knowledge base to diagnose and assess the complex nature of dilemmas that arise

in order to respond to such a dilemma (Larson et al., 2009). Sternberg's balance theory of wisdom

captures the concept of appraising a dilemma situation. Sternberg described four (of seven) processes

underlying wisdom as 'recognizing the existence of a problem, defining the nature of the problem,

representing information about the problem, and formulating a strategy for solving the problem'

(Sternberg, 1998, p. 356). These expert processes that occur before responding to a dilemma can be

informative. Therefore, it is useful to explore how youth workers appraise dilemmas.

A central part of analyzing dilemmas involves contemplating multiple considerations.

Considerations are the issues a youth worker reflects on before responding to a dilemma. For

example, in the dilemma involving John, Krueger stated the following: John's "life experiences were

filled with failure and rejection," he had been "severely abused by his father," John would not have

appreciated Mark being fake by taking it easy on him, and that *both* John and he had a "need to win"

(Krueger, 2005). Youth workers process multiple considerations (Larson et al., 2009).

Considerations can include administrative, ethical, service delivery, developmental, or professional

concerns (Banks, 2005; Larson & Walker, 2010; Walker & Larson, 2006). It has been found that

more experienced youth workers tend to identify more considerations than novice youth workers

(Larson et al., 2009). It fact, it may be that youth workers that embody certain competencies engage

in a process of having multiple considerations.

4

Practitioners often balance competing considerations that involve various parties related to the dilemma. When considerations are competing, challenges that arise are more likely to require practitioners to undergo a process. At times, considerations may be competing simply because they involve different people with conflicting interests. Sternberg described how wisdom can involve balancing various interests through "the application of tacit knowledge as mediated by values toward the goal of achieving a common good" (Sternberg, 1998, p. 353). The family is likely to be an additional interest thrown into everyday events and interactions for which youth workers must apply wisdom in order to achieve "a balance of various self-interests (intrapersonal), with the interests of others (interpersonal), and of other aspects of the context in which one lives (extrapersonal)" (Sternberg, 1998, p. 354). The work of Krueger, Larson & Walker, and Sternberg suggest that identifying the types of dilemmas that arise involving families is not enough; one must also understand the multiple, often competing considerations of youth workers when encountering such dilemma situations in order to explore the process in which expertise is applied.

Family Dilemmas and Considerations

Parents play a role in youth programs that could potentially lead to dilemmas. Youth practitioners consider parents when planning program logistics. For example, youth workers in various programs plan events for parents; utilize parent volunteers; deal with misbehavior of parents during sporting events if an athletic team; and attempt to use different techniques to involve parents while keeping in mind that parents may prefer to give their adolescent child space (Messias, Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina, 2005; Tiffany & Young, 2004; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008; Zulli, Frierson, & Clayton, 1998).

In addition, parents influence whether youth participate in programming. Research has shown that parents influence a youth's initial decision to join or not join a particular program by their behavior, opinions, rules, or support (Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, & Stone, 2005; Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Hultsman, 1993; Perkins, Borden, Villarruel, Carlton-Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2007). Research also suggests that parental involvement within a youth program is positively correlated with a youth maintaining participation in that program (Denault & Poulin, 2008). Therefore, parents can play a role in youth programs which, by extension, could potentially lead to dilemmas and considerations related to the family of participants.

The parent-adolescent relationship may create dilemmas that are particularly unique to youth that age (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Although adolescence is often considered in the United States as a time to become independent from one's family, parents can still have a significant influence on adolescents even as time spent with the peer group increases. Relationships

5

with parents impact an adolescent's self-esteem, socio-emotional adjustment, susceptibility to depression, and ethnic identity formation (Antaramian, Huebner, & Valois, 2008; Demo, Small, & Savin-Williams, 1987; Hale, Valk, Engels, & Meeus, 2005; Mahoney, Schweder, & Stattin, 2002; Smetana et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006). Therefore, certain issues related to the parent-adolescent relationship could be relevant to youth practitioners faced with dilemmas involving families.

Youth workers may face challenges in regards to parents that are similar to the challenges faced by other professionals working with youth. Research has begun to identify dilemmas related to the family in youth programs (Larson & Walker, 2010). Similarly to schools, one may surmise that there is a complex interaction between parents, youth, and youth workers. Weiss reported teachers facing various dilemmas involving families (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, & Chatman-Nelson, 2005). One study reported teachers feeling like "their professionalism was being questioned when parents accepted student versions of events at face value, and they wondered whether parents had any respect for their training and experience" while parents described feeling that they were "caught in a bind when they were not informed of problems from the start, yet were expected to immediately address a problem once informed or were stonewalled when they tried to get more information" (Miretzky, 2004, pp. 835-836). Other studies have found tension between teachers and parents, especially when factors like culture, immigrant status, and socioeconomic status are involved (Crozier, 1999; Romo & Falbo, 1996; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Waters, 1999, pp. 267-270). Therefore, although there is limited discussion on youth workers facing dilemmas involving families, the dilemmas teachers face related to communication, parental involvement, professionalism, culture, and socioeconomic status may be replicated in the youth program.

The Current Study

The goal of this study was to explore the dilemmas youth workers face regarding families of participants. The two questions explored were:

1) What categories of dilemmas do youth workers face regarding families?

2) What considerations do youth workers have when faced with such dilemmas?

Through exploring these two questions, I have identified themes that emerged regarding the youth work professional, the adolescent, and the family. The ideas of youth worker competencies, dilemmas, considerations, and adolescent-parent-youth professional relationships are used to present the findings of this project. I explored dilemmas described by a sample of practitioners at high quality youth programs serving adolescents. I believe that youth workers at high quality programs

6

are likely to embody important youth worker competencies. As a result, their perspectives could be informative.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Research Design

Qualitative research methods of data collection and data analysis were employed for this study because such methods are useful for exploring new research areas, understanding processes, and describing individuals' perceptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data was collected through open-ended interviews. Grounded theory and other qualitative methods were used to analyze the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These methods were used to construct categories of dilemmas faced by youth workers, identify the considerations youth workers held regarding dilemmas, and develop themes. These methods were used to ultimately identify information that could be relevant for professional development experiences for youth workers based on day-to-day experiences of youth workers at high quality programs.

The Sample and Data Collection

This study included a sample of youth workers from twelve diverse high quality youth programs serving urban and rural adolescents (ages 13-21) studied over their regular program period (from two to nine months). The sample was identified through data from a larger longitudinal study called The Youth Development Experience (TYDE). Programs were identified as high quality based on the opinions of youth development experts in the community, researchers' meetings with staff, and observations of the programs (following steps used by McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1994). These youth development experts were identified through local intermediary organizations, university research centers, and relevant agencies. Programs in the sample were chosen based on structural characteristics and process characteristics (Durlak, Mahoney, Bonhert, & Parente, 2010, p.289). TYDE researchers asked youth development researchers, funders, trainers, practitioners, and participants to identify "high quality" programs for high-school aged youth in which youth were "stretched" by learning either skills or more generally about the world. From those identified, programs were chosen that were structured (rather than drop in), had regular voluntary participation, employed staff that had been with the program for at least two years or more, and had little staff turnover. Project oriented programs were targeted. These were then observed for signs of "youth centeredness, youth participation that was consistent and enthusiastic," and positive staff-youth relationships. When meeting with staff, it was noted whether staff emphasized the importance of youth development. Based on these steps, twelve programs were chosen.

Table 1 provides information on the twelve programs in the study. All were project oriented. Programs varied in a focus on the arts, technology, leadership, or service. Three programs were in rural locations, seven in cities, and two in midsized cities. There were four school based programs,

six community based programs, and two faith based programs. The programs varied in size from 10 to 110 youth. The ethnicity of the youth in the programs was primarily White, African American, or Latino. Three programs were primarily white. Two programs were primarily Latino. Four programs were mixed.

The current study's sample included all primary program leaders (n=18) and some support staff (n=8). Programs had one to two primary leaders and often had other adults in supportive roles. Table 2 provides information on the primary leaders. Most primary leaders had been working at their programs for two to nine years (n=17). The majority of leaders were between the ages of 25-35 (n=12). There were nine European Americans, six African Americans, one Arab American, one East Indian, and one Puerto Rican. There were 125 interviews conducted with the 18 primary leaders and eight adults who served in supportive roles.

Data from the sample of youth workers was enhanced by program documents, interviews with youth, and demographic information about youth from the larger study. The larger study included 113 youth interviewed who were selected to be representative. There were sixty-two female and fifty-one male youth interviewed. This included 37 African American, 36 White, 32 Latino, 6 Biracial, and 2 Asian youth. Approximately 25% of the sample of youth with origin of parents known had at least one immigrant parent. There were 661 interviews with the 113 youth. Small fragments of additional data for these dilemmas were obtained from those leaders and youth that were located two to three years later for subsequent contact.

<div align="center">The Interview Protocol</div>

The primary source for the data used in the current study came from the interviews with leaders. Other data sources such as youth interviews about program events and program documents were used to supplement the information provided by leaders. Since interviews were developed to ask leaders about what was occurring on a daily basis in the program, many of the dilemmas identified came from various points in the interviews. However, there were specific places in the interview protocols that asked about dilemmas (Appendix A). During the initial interview, the researcher expressed the study's interest in any dilemmas that may arise. The phone interview and mid-interview protocols had sections with questions about recent dilemmas, how leaders decided to handle such dilemmas, and how they felt about their decisions. The final interview protocol included a section asking leaders to describe their most difficult challenges, obstacles, or frustrations over the course of the program. The follow up interview protocol not only asked about dilemmas or challenges but also had a section specifically related to youth's parents. Therefore, family dilemmas were described in the leader interviews in response to general open ended questions, open ended

questions specifically about dilemmas, and open ended questions specifically related to the families of participants. Youth interviews as well as one program document were used to supplement these data.

Family Dilemma Data Set

This study focused on 27 dilemma situations involving families of participants. Table 3 lists these family dilemmas. Characteristics of youth involved in these dilemmas are also displayed in Table 3. The dilemma situations came from nine different youth programs. The operational definition used to describe a dilemma situation was the following: "Challenges, dilemmas, situations and incidents that the leaders faced…any situation that requires deliberation by leaders, or where different leaders might have responded in different ways. Some may involve long term struggles; others brief situations" (Larson & Walker, 2010).

The 27 dilemma situations used in the sample were identified in different ways. Some dilemmas situations were part of a previously constructed data set of 250 youth practitioner dilemmas identified by TYDE researchers (see: Larson & Walker, 2010). These researchers identified five categories of dilemmas with one category (interfacing with external worlds) including family dilemmas. Seventeen situations were previously categorized as family dilemmas by the TYDE researchers. Eight situations were previously categorized as part of the larger dilemma data set, but I newly classified them as also being related to the family. In addition, I identified six situations in interview data, mostly from reviewing transcripts of subsequent contacts with leaders. The process for choosing these 27 is described further under Stage One of the Data Analysis section.

I located raw data to assemble a description of each dilemma situation. Basic information was available for the original dilemmas identified by TYDE researchers. I used the search engine on Microsoft Word to locate relevant data for each dilemma in interview transcripts. I searched in leader interviews and relevant youth interviews for any key phrases that might be said in reference to each dilemma and kept record of this search. I used TYDE's demographic information to identify the characteristics of youth involved. I identified relevant program materials with the help of the Project Director for the TYDE study.

I kept a separate document for each dilemma. Raw data was included in the document that dealt with descriptions of the dilemma situation in interviews (of youth workers and youth); family characteristics (such as ethnicity) of youth involved in that situation; or notes from relevant program documents. Excerpts from the raw data were then coded as either a dilemma aspect of a situation or as a response aspect of a situation. Finally, the document included a dilemma summary which consisted of a concise title, a brief description of the dilemma, codes for the data in which

10

information originated, and poignant interview excerpts that highlighted the youth workers' perception of the dilemma.

<center>Data Analysis</center>

The goal of the data analysis was to identify the types of dilemmas leaders described and how leaders understood the family dilemmas that arose. Techniques in grounded theory analysis can move one from a data realm into a conceptual realm and, finally, into a theoretical realm (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I started with the raw data, searched for patterns in this raw data, and then speculated about what the big ideas were. This was not a linear process. Continuing to return to the data was important throughout the data analysis. This reciprocal process was especially important when developing themes in order to ensure that my interpretations were tied to youth workers' lived experiences. Throughout the data analysis process, an expert who has used grounded theory methods provided feedback which helped refine, specify, and find patterns in categories. The implications of being a former teacher who had experiences with parents may have made me more attuned to the data as well as the information communicated by the youth workers. The data analysis involved three stages.

Stages of Data Analysis

Stage one: constructing categories. The goal of the first stage of analysis was to identify common categories of dilemmas. This involved utilizing comparative analysis (Hood, 2007). The dilemma situations originally identified were iteratively compared to one another to look for characteristics of dilemmas that were similar. Initially, this led to seven dilemma categories. These were identified in a narrow way based on specifics of each dilemma situation. I, however, sought to reduce the number of categories because there was some conceptual overlap and because fewer categories could provide more robust information. Strategies for classifying dilemma situations in broader types of categories included comparing dilemmas based on where a problem originated (e.g. in the youth program or from the family). The dilemma category descriptions were revised to reflect the similarities and differences between dilemma situations. Similarities and differences between situations were noted until theoretical categories began to emerge.

Some of the initial dilemma situations (numbering 31) were dropped from the analysis as four categories began to be constructed. Although three dilemmas involving siblings and one involving a youth's own child were compared during this process, they were excluded because there were too few to allow meaningful analysis. In addition, two dilemmas had been classified into more than one category, but they were assigned a primary category for the analysis. By using comparative analysis, the data set of 27 dilemma situations was grouped into four dilemma categories.

<center>11</center>

Stage two: identifying considerations. The goal of the second stage of analysis was to identify the central types of considerations that youth workers mentioned in each dilemma category. This process involved memoing and drafting handwritten tables. First, I wrote down the specific considerations I saw in each dilemma. Then I created a matrix for each dilemma category that had been identified (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For each category, I then listed each dilemma situation and identified any elements related to each of the corresponding considerations. This allowed me to see which specific considerations recurred within the category. By identifying which considerations frequently arose within each category, general patterns were identified.

Stage three:interpretation of central themes. The goal of the third stage was to interpret the findings by constructing themes from the analyses. These themes are a discussion of what the findings suggest about the nature of issues generally related to the interactions between the youth worker, the adolescent, and/or the parents. A central theme was identified for each dilemma category. This was integrated in the process of writing up the findings. Constructing the themes was very much like a memoing process. All of the previous analyses were utilized. Interpretation of central themes primarily involved reflecting on any patterns that occurred during the processes within each category. Within each category, I reflected on any similarities that existed in the processes leaders experienced from the moment a dilemma occurred to moments before a response was made. In addition, extant literature was referred to in order to help in the interpretation and the development of central themes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The Findings section discusses each of the four dilemma categories that were identified from the grounded theory analysis. For each category, I first describe the dimensions of the dilemma category using the most relevant dilemma situations in the category. I then provide an example that illustrates these dimensions. Finally, the distinct considerations from the category are reported and illustrated. Table 4 shows the dilemma situations organized by categories. All names used (leaders, youth, and programs) are pseudonyms.

Dilemma Category One:

Problems at Home that Became a Concern to the Leader

The first dilemma category entails occasions when leaders learned about a youth with family problems. Upon learning of the situation, the leader became concerned about how these problems between the adolescent and his/her parents impacted the youth's well-being. In some situations, leaders learned of family problems when a youth asked for help or complained. In other situations, leaders suspected a youth had family problems because of the youth's demeanor. For example, Ann (a theater director from Les Miserables) suspected that a girl distracted from her work was having problems at home.

The five most salient dilemmas in this category involved varying types of family problems. Some appeared to be ordinary adolescent-parent conflicts such as when the instructor from Media Masters, Gary, was the sounding board for a boy who was upset that his parents forbid him to play video games. Other problems were more serious such as when a girl consulted Linda, program coordinator from SisterHood, because she was too scared to tell her conservative mother about the possibility that she was pregnant. Family stressors, such as poverty and divorce, were issues relevant to some situations.

Kanika, the Engineer from Sonic Studio, was one leader who faced Dilemma Category One when Luis told her about his problems at home. Luis, a 21 year old Latino youth, participating in Sonic Studio was kicked out of his house because he did not get along with his mother's significant other. As a result, Luis had no home, no job, and no money. He felt betrayed by his mother, who had been one of the main people he trusted. Luis described the situation that he experienced:

> I went through my little depression stage. I stopped doing music for a little bit, I was just like 'Man, I don't know what to do.' I still came to the studio and I still recorded. But like doing my own projects it was like I just stopped. I just didn't feel like doing it. I was looking for friends, but then all the sudden friends weren't around no more, so it was like Sonic Studio was the only place for me, you know and I was always here.

13

Luis often confided in the leaders at Sonic Studio about his difficult situation. He explained that: "I was always talking to Kanika. They knew my mom had kicked me out and I had nowhere to stay, I was movin' from house to house you know, just real crazy, just real hectic for me at that time."

Kanika was very concerned about Luis and his family problems. First, she noticed Luis was depressed. She was concerned that Luis might need medical attention because he was very emotional. In addition, she was aware that his mother took medication for mental illness. Kanika struggled with Luis' lack of motivation within the program which she believed was related to issues at home. She explained: "I think that's really like been one of my biggest challenges; working with him and seeing how he wants to do so much, but there's something going on that won't allow him to trust himself." Kanika not only faced a dilemma with Luis individually, she also had other youth complain that it was unfair that Luis was allowed to spend so much more time at the program than they were.

Considerations in Category One

Analysis of the dilemma situations within Category One revealed three issues that youth workers took into consideration when facing a dilemma involving family problems. These were:

1) the youth's material needs

2) the youth's behavior and emotional state or needs

3) the possible roles that the youth worker should or should not play such as being an adviser, listener, encourager, or someone the youth is dependent on

The first consideration in this category was a concern for the youth's material needs. Luis said he told Kanika: "'Man, I haven't eaten in 3 days Kanika, I don't got no money'." He said he was surprised when she addressed that need so quickly by immediately giving him petty cash. In a similar dilemma situation, Bonita, the Employment Specialist at Sonic Studio, explained why she focused so much energy on helping Darryl, an 18 year old African American youth, who lacked self direction. She discussed how providing him with responsibilities and a job connection was so important because of his difficult home life. In regards to Darryl, whose parents were separated, she stated: "We just keep talking to him everyday because…the home situation still isn't that great. There's still not enough money at home and there's still different family issues."

The second consideration regarded a youth's behavior and emotional state or needs. Gary from Media Masters described Rafael's emotional state as being "just frustrated" regarding his argument with his parents. Ann, at Les Miserables, speculated about one girl's behavior after the youth refused to follow the stage directions which called for other cast members to catch her by stating: "There has got to be a reason…could it be something like she is scared of heights? Could it

be something like, or let's go deeper. So you are constantly having to listen to what she is not saying as well as what she is saying, and it was some serious issues at home." Similarly, Kanika speculated about how problems at home might be influencing Luis' behavior and emotional state. She stated,

> there's a disconnect somewhere…I don't know if it's his mother, his friends or somewhere, it's somebody or maybe it's just something inside of him that kinda makes him feel like he can't do it, or he's not good enough to do certain things.

At times this consideration involved a bit of detective work in which youth workers made educated guesses about the cause of a youth's behavior and emotional state or needs. These educated guesses were made by recognizing differences in a youth's behavior or remembering past family problems that they concluded had resurfaced. Leaders often sought to confirm their speculations by talking with the youth.

Finally, youth workers considered the possible roles that they should or should not play. They said it was important that they not give up on youth with problems and that they make sure they listen. Some considered the role they should not play. Kanika struggled with the possible roles she should play and what role would be most beneficial to Luis. She stated: "I think the more that I help him he becomes kinda dependent on me doing things for him and I don't want him to depend on me, because if I get fired, where will he be?" Linda from SisterHood described struggling because she did not feel she was a therapist or clinician with the needed expertise to advise the young girl with the pregnancy scare when she came to her for help.

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Dilemma Category Two:

Parental Demands Are Incongruent with Program Norms or Functioning

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The second dilemma category involved situations when parents had requests that were at odds with the program expectations, guidelines, or rules set. For example, leaders had expectations regarding the behavior of youth at a program. They had guidelines regarding scheduling. They had rules about what would get a youth expelled from the program. A dilemma would emerge, however, when leaders faced parents who demanded something that did not fit with these program norms. The majority of the most detailed dilemmas (3 out of 4) were from the school based theater program, Les Miserables. It is important to note that while this program is the one that faced most of these dilemma situations, it was also reported that parents participated in the program in very positive ways. In addition, these parental demands may be the nature of theater programs.

Ann, the director at Les Miserables, faced demands from parents that were incongruent with the expectations she had set in place to produce a play. She communicated in the beginning of the program that she expected youth to dedicate a significant amount of time. She held a meeting with

<div align="center">15</div>

students to discuss the obligations youth were required to meet; provided youth with a contract to sign; and gave out detailed monthly schedules. The schedules communicated the time expectations. For example, excerpts from a schedule during the final week before the production illustrate her communications:

> April 28th: …NO SCHOOL BUT WE HAVE DRESS REHEARSAL
>
> April 29th: …BOTH CASTS REQUIRED TO BE HERE THE WHOLE NIGHT!!!
>
> April 30th: …You are expected to be with us allllllllllll day!"

Ann also had a meeting for parents at the beginning of the program in which she made a point of communicating these expectations.

However, as the rehearsals progressed some parents questioned her about the scheduling of the practices, the time commitment of participating, and the time it took away from academics. For example, Ann received notes from parents such as one which said, "Why is my child having to be there? My child has to study." Liz, the producer at Les Miserables, described occasional complaints to the principal. Liz stated that, "Once or twice a parent has called the principal with complaints, and then he calls us in." Finally, during the ACT exam time parents complained that youth needed to go to bed early the night before, not rehearse for a play. Ann stated: "I always will have a few disgruntled parents, it's always been that way, it probably always will be that way."

Considerations in Category Two

Analysis of the four dilemmas revealed two considerations held by youth workers when facing parental demands incongruent with program norms or functioning. They considered:

> 1) The parents' perception of the issue
>
> 2) The impact fulfilling parental demands would have on the program

Leaders considered how the parents perceived the situation. For example, Mike at Harambee considered the mother's point of view when she angrily confronted him about how he should not dismiss her daughter from the program. He viewed the parent's combative reaction as understandable because of the way in which parents have to navigate the school system. He stated:

> And a school that doesn't treat parents well and a school where, often times, parents feel the only recourse they have is to get loud and make some demands….all of [these] things are in play when something like this kind happens.

Liz, the producer at Les Miserables, described making an effort to be very tactful in a conversation with one mother who complained about her daughter not getting bigger roles because the mother thought her daughter was extremely talented.

Leaders also considered how fulfilling the demands of parents could impact the program. Ann described how fulfilling parental requests would make rehearsals less effective:

If I had to call everybody [students] and say, 'You need to be here at this time, exactly at this time,' that's all I would get done, so I have to have a general call, if you're in scene one, if you're in scene two, you know, you need to be here so that the flow can be here, and it's not reasonable to say, yes, you're gonna be here from 7:15 to 7:25.

<p align="center">Dilemma Category Three:</p>

<p align="center">Parents did not Support or Opposed the Youth's Participation</p>

The third category involved parents who were against youth's participation in the program. Whereas parents in Category Two wanted the leader to make changes to the program to accommodate their child, parents in Category Three did not like their child being in the program. Parents either did not support participation by describing what they did not like about the program or opposed participation by trying to forbid their child from participating in the program altogether. At times leaders described dilemmas involving specific parents such as when Pablo at El Concilo described parents who looked through the program window and told him the program was too much fun and not a good place for youth. Other leaders described parental opposition in more general terms such as Janna at Media Masters who vaguely stated that "a lot of parents…don't understand the value of the program."

Analysis of youth interviews suggested that parents who opposed the program often had values that diverged from the mission of the program or thought youth's priorities should be elsewhere. In particular, youth interviews suggested that immigrant parents were often not familiar with the concept of a youth program, wanted daughters at home for safety or childcare, or opposed youth getting into a career in the arts. It appeared that some parents opposed participation but never directly addressed leaders. Jason, Lead Organizer from Youth Action, described the downside of not being directly informed of parental opposition when he stated: "I'd rather have the parents who are going to question, because then I know what's up, otherwise I don't know if the parents don't care or do care." However, when the leaders in this category learned of parental opposition they faced a dilemma. Parental opposition unfolded in various ways with some dilemmas having far more information than others. The example that follows illustrates the complexity of a Category Three family dilemma.

Elena, an 18 year old Mexican American female had a mother who was against her participation in Youth Action, a youth organizing program. Elena came from a conservative, Catholic background. Her mother was an immigrant who had difficulty with English. Elena

<p align="center">17</p>

indicated that her mother communicated pretty directly that she did not like the work the program did and that initially that affected Elena's participation in the program. As time passed, it stopped affecting her participation. One night Elena's mother saw her at a program fundraising event with her boyfriend and demanded she quit the program. Elena told her mom she would not quit. Elena explained, "…that's when she ended up kicking me out. And I didn't quit and I'm not at home, so—she's not supportive."   Even in her follow-up interview three years later, at age 21, Elena described her conversations in the initial interviews as being connected to her mother not understanding the program:

> I think at the time I talked about a lot of issues that I was having with my mother because she just didn't understand what I wanted to do like organizing work and she didn't understand why I had to be at a center like 3 days out of the week or why I have to be with boys all the time. She didn't understand it.

Jason faced a dilemma when Elena's mother caused a scene and ordered her to quit the program. Jason knew about issues Elena had with her mother even before the dilemma occurred because Elena discussed them often with Jason. Jason stated that Elena had lots of "personal crap in her life right now" based on Elena often confiding in the leader.   However, Jason had never seen Elena this upset before. He was unsure how he should immediately react to the scene at the program. He was also unsure of how he should react in the long term since Elena's mother wanted her to quit.

Considerations in Category Three

The considerations in Category Three dealt with the reasons the youth worker suspected parents opposed the program. Within this category of dilemma, youth leaders considered various reasons that parents may be against program participation such as:

1) Cultural values such as gender expectations and relations

2) Misconceptions of youth programs that may include the purpose of youth programs in general or the politics/activities of the specific program

3) Academics and the importance parents placed on focusing on academics rather than an extracurricular activity

4) Safety, especially when traveling to and from the program

Although seeking to understand the parents' point of view sounds simple, it actually played out as multifaceted and complex considerations. Youth workers hypothesized factors like culture, academics, safety, or misconceptions of programs.

Youth workers considered cultural values. For example, the female adult who served as a supportive role in Youth Action referred to culture when she discussed how some parents were against the program because they did not want their daughter's hanging out with boys:

> And for the young women, the parents don't want them to come and hang out with young men… I can relate to them because my mother was the same way, and she was very careful about where I was and what I was doing. I'm Latina, so I think that helps.

Jason consulted the leader above when considering Elena's unique family problems within the context of cultural values. Elena's mother did not understand the program or like her spending time with guys. This may have been connected to culture because her mother was an immigrant and conservative. For example, the values that Elena alluded to appeared to be gender related because her mother complained that she was out of the house too much and did not think it was appropriate for her to spend so much time in a program with boys. Jason considered the role that cultural context played because he ultimately responded to the situation by consulting the co-leader above from a similar family background.

Youth workers also considered the misconceptions parents held regarding the program. Leaders described conversations they had with the parents in which they attempted to address any misconceptions parents may have had about the program. For example, Pablo from El Concilo (a community service program) organized parent events so they could see the work that youth were doing. Janna from Media Masters described how calling the parents to clear up misconceptions and let them know how well their child was doing often won support for the program.

Youth workers considered that parents could have other priorities for their children. For example, in a separate situation Jason from Youth Action considered the importance parents placed on a youth's academics when he stated, "If they're messing up in school and their parents feel like Youth Action is just one other thing that pulls them away from it, then it becomes a tension."

Finally, Bonita from Sonic Studio, described considering parents' safety concerns because some were nervous about their child attending a program in an area with gang activity. In such situations, Bonita would explain to parents precautions taken by the program including having a gang intervention specialist who ensured that the program was in a safe zone and "about 95% of the gangs respected that and usually did not bother our kids within that block" (Bonita). After describing this as well as other situations of parental opposition, Bonita explained that understanding a parent's point of view was the logical first step to sustaining youth participation: "I never had a parent to say, I don't want my kid to do this, it was usually always a reason behind it and I would say 9 times out of 10 it was a reason that we could possibly fit."

19

Dilemma Category Four:

Communicating Information to the Parents about their Child

The fourth category concerned when a leader must, should, or could communicate information to parents about their child. The information they needed to communicate varied. For example, some information was logistical such as making parents aware of an upcoming protest or telling a parent that the youth is being kicked out of the program. Sometimes a leader questioned whether it was their place to share information such as debating whether certain information may betray a youth's trust. At times, the idea of sharing information could be nerve-wracking such as contacting a parent about an uncomfortable or delicate subject.

Rebecca, a leader at Art First (an art and career development program), was nervous about calling David's mother. David was a youth with a "severe learning disorder." David was enrolled in a Career Planning course, and his mother assumed that she could sign him up for the Art-at-Work program. Rebecca planned to call David's mother to tell her that the program was not developmentally appropriate for the young man. Rebecca was aware that David's mother felt the program was a safe space for him. In addition, she highly respected how supportive his mother was of the youth. Therefore, Rebecca felt she needed to contact his mother, but she stated: "THAT's going to be a challenge for me, that phone call."

Considerations in Category Four

It appears that leaders considered various things when faced with a situation in which the leader must, should, or could be communicating information to parents about their child. Leaders considered the:

1) Parents' point of view to understand how the parent may react to the information given

2) Youth's well being

3) Program rules, regulations, or procedural issues

4) Ethical issues

Youth workers considered the parental perspective in order to predict how parents would react to the information communicated. Rebecca considered the parents' point of view in terms of how supportive David's mother was to him. This consideration appears to be what caused Rebecca to be nervous about making the phone call.

The youth's well being was also a major consideration in these dilemmas. Liz at Les Miserables described how she was compelled to contact a mother because she was concerned about a freshman girl dating a senior.

20

I heard via the grapevine that this senior intentionally went out with freshmen girls to see what he could get…. And that worried me. …Should I call, what should I do, and so finally I did call her, and said this may be none of my business, and anytime you want…you just tell me to drop it, I will, but this is my concern.

Rebecca also was clearly considering the youth's well being when thinking about whether Art-at-Work was developmentally appropriate for David. Although she was nervous about calling the mother, Rebecca explained in her interview that not doing so would "do David a discredit too" because it would put "him in a position where he would be struggling."

Some youth workers considered program rules, regulations, or procedural issues. To some extent, Rebecca considered these. Before phoning David's mother, Rebecca stated that she anticipated the other challenging part of the phone call to David's mother would be discussing "other ways that he can really excel during the summer." A program rule about participants being in good academic standing was a main consideration for Ann at Les Miserables. She had to tell a boy's mother and a friend of hers that Robert was being cut from the play because of his low grades. Ann explained that: "I don't wanna be legalistic, but rules are rules and I have to follow by them, the academics have to come first." Although this consideration was very important, Ann described a complex dilemma:

I can't be [a] friend, because I had to do what was best for Robert and it wasn't best for him to not be doing well academically…he can't get by in life if he doesn't have his academics in order, and that was kind of hard for his parents to understand because they were seeing that drama's what made him want to study, so it's kind of one of those catch 22 situations but at the same time there are rules put by the district also that I need to go by, and that I totally agree with…I'm hoping that it gets cleared up, you know, on a personal level.

Finally, youth workers considered the ethical issues. Liz from Les Miserables considered ethical issues when the freshman was dating a senior. She did not want to betray the trust of the daughter who was in the program or her mother who was her friend. Therefore, the dilemma of needing to communicate information to a parent was related to competing moral obligations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Summary

The goal of this study was to explore the dilemmas youth workers face regarding parents of adolescent participants. Since the sample was comprised of practitioners at high quality youth programs, the findings suggest the process by which competent youth workers go about understanding these dilemmas. The four dilemma categories youth workers faced included (1) being concerned about a participant with family problems, (2) having the parent of a participant make demands on the program, (3) having a parent not support their child's participation, and (4) needing to share information with parents. Each dilemma category also included youth workers' considerations. This informs current literature because there is little, if any, information on the actual dilemmas youth workers face with parents of participants in programs, besides programs that are sports related (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

From each category emerged themes based on its corresponding considerations. Below I discuss the central theme that appeared to represent youth workers' perceptions as they appraised situations in the category. Findings and themes that emerged are summarized in Table 5. The emerging themes are as follows:

Theme Emerging From the Considerations in Category One

An underlying theme of this category was the leaders' struggle to understand what was inside their control. The youth workers recognized that while the family system and the youth's emotions were two things they wanted to *understand,* these were also two things that they could not *control*. Leaders could see the impact of the family system on the youth's emotions. Relationships, lack of relationships, and negative relationship dynamics in the family affected youth's demeanor, behavior, and self-esteem in the program. Uncontrollable family issues also led to the youth reaching out to the practitioner. However, the leader could rarely respond directly to the root of the problem. For example, although Kanika considered the impact being kicked out had on Luis, she did not appear to consider trying to persuade his mother to let him stay in the household, because her role was not that of a family counselor.

For the most part, then, leaders could only play an indirect role in helping a youth with the impact that family issues had on him or her by identifying helpful tools inside their control. First, youth workers utilized resources so they could empower youth. Resources included items or people within the program, community resources, and personal contacts. For example, Kanika utilized the program's petty cash fund after considering Luis's basic material needs so he could purchase a meal. Another youth worker utilized the women's health center. And another contacted a friend who had a

22

job available. A second tool that was inside youth workers' control was making a conscientious effort to foster a strong relationship with the youth in order to provide support. All the leaders acted in ways that cultivated relationships. Strategies like checking in with youth, listening to youth, advising them, and hugging them were mentioned by the youth workers facing these dilemmas. This is consistent with literature stating that the relationships youth have with youth workers is very important to a youth's well being and can be beneficial in a troubling situation within the family (Rhodes, 2004; Mahoney et al, 2002).

Theme Emerging From the Considerations in Category Two

An underlying theme of this category was that one must negotiate between the interests of the parents and the interests of the program. On one hand, it was very important for leaders to be aware of the interests of parents. Being aware of these interests involved having a perception of what was going on beyond just the situation at hand. This required one to listen. Understanding parental interests required that leaders imagine characteristics of the contexts parents navigated. This was evident when Mike from Harambee recognized that navigating the school system may shape how parents approach the youth professionals. Understanding such contexts gave youth workers greater insight on the nature of parental demands and the larger dilemma situation. On the other hand, it was important to be aware of the interests of the program. For example, conceding to parental demands that are incongruent with program norms had the possibility of negatively impacting the operation of the program. Mike, for example, had a good conversation with the girl's mother to explain the details about everything in that case, but in the end the youth was expelled. He was disappointed to let the girl go, but he also recognized how this was beneficial to the larger program; he stated "I think there's some kids who were kind of alienated by [the girl] and now will be more comfortable." Balancing the two interests of the parents and the program could be challenging. This may be why experienced leaders such as those at Les Miserables made a conscientious effort to anticipate and head off situations by sending home written communication in advance.

Theme Emerging From Considerations in Category Three

An underlying theme of this category was that leaders were understanding and respecting of parental concerns. In addition, the leader could be most effective in maintaining youth participation by addressing the concerns of the parents. In order to address those concerns, youth workers needed to be aware of the parental views. The youth workers sought to understand what parental concerns were in order to address parents. By doing so, leaders could build the trust of parents such as what was likely to happen when leaders invited parents to the program or contacted them. By recognizing and respecting concerns, leaders hoped to show parents how the program was a space safe for their

child who was at an age where parents struggle with how much freedom to give to their child. Although the leaders did not always gain parental support after responding, it is important to note that youth workers made an attempt to not only identify their concerns but also to respect the parents even when they were against the program.

Theme Emerging From Considerations in Category Four

An underlying theme of this category appeared to be that communicating information to parents could be delicate and emotionally taxing. Leaders were sensitive regarding the nature of the information they needed to share such as when Liz recognized that a teenager's personal life is often something that is not shared with parents. They also recognized the benefits and consequences of sharing it. In many ways this category was about the youth leader doing what they considered "right" even when it was difficult. What makes something right or wrong was often determined by leaders as they balanced considerations. Leaders had to determine how communicating to a parent might be related to the youth's well being. They also had to determine what the program rules, regulations, or procedural issues dictated as well as how that would relate to being ethical. Therefore a leader's values (whether valuing youth, program structure, or ethics) heavily influenced this category.

More than the other dilemmas, thinking through considerations seemed to be emotionally taxing for leaders facing dilemmas in Category Four. Even Ann who was clear about her decision felt emotionally taxed about the unresolved communication with Robert's mother when she said: "I'm not real good at that, I lose sleep over those." Rebecca anticipated a conversation with David's mother by stating, "I feel like a ramble." Leaders used words like "challenging" and "worried." Being emotionally taxing may have been the anticipation of needing to communicate information with parents about their child. Part of this may have also been because practitioners' personal values were so tied to the considerations in this dilemma.

A Process Model:

Moving From a Problem Toward a Solution

An interpretation of the current study's findings and themes yielded a conceptual process model. The process began with a dilemma emerging, youth workers engaging in appraisal, and youth workers moving towards a solution.

The Dilemma Emerges

I speculate that the reason the youth workers in this sample faced such dilemmas was because the family and the program were divergent worlds. These dilemmas arose when the adults in the two settings appeared to have conflicting goals, different priorities, awareness of different facets of

24

youth's lives, and different types of relationships with the youth. Whereas a youth worker's goals were shaped by the needs of multiple youth as individuals and as a group entity, parental goals were shaped by the needs of their individual child and their family. Whereas the youth worker prioritized the program's mission to facilitate youth development through a project, parents prioritized their values, beliefs, and aspirations for their own child. Whereas youth workers had a mentor-like relationship with the adolescent (characterized by being informal, relatively short-term, oftentimes serving as a confidant), parents had a caretaker relationship (characterized by being life-long and legally responsible, oftentimes concerned about fostering their child's development in *all* domains). Out of these divergent worlds, family dilemmas inevitably rose.

These different goals, priorities, and relationships may have influenced how the adults perceived events related to the program and, as a result, be what led to dilemmas arising. For example, even the simple act of an adolescent participating in a program could be perceived differently by a youth worker and a parent. A youth worker's perception of youth participation might be: *These teens are benefitting from completing this project as a group in a way they would not get from anyplace else!* Yet a parent's perception of youth participation could be: *My child needs to study after school in order to graduate, so this program may be fun, but it is certainly not essential!* These varying perceptions, tied to settings, appeared to be central to family dilemmas. Leaders' task in dealing with family dilemmas was to step into an unknown territory which they knew little about and had little control over.

Youth Workers Appraise the Dilemma

Youth workers in this sample appraised the problem by speculating about the family setting and hypothesizing about how scenarios would unfold if they chose certain actions. Leaders engaged in a reflective appraisal process that involved speculating about this unknown territory. Speculating helped them better understand the dilemma situation. They speculated by using knowledge they had from experience- such as knowledge of similar dilemmas that arose before, prior experiences with a particular child or parent, and specific issues facing a particular child. They speculated by reflection on discussions with youth or parents such as a parent sharing the goals they have for their child and a youth venting about problems. They speculated on the intricacies of dilemmas by using keen observation of things like youth's demeanor, group interactions, child characteristics (such as culture), and challenges parents face when navigating schools. Youth workers speculated about the impact of the contexts parents operated in, parental values and goals, and the concerns of parents. For example, a youth worker might speculate: *Since this parent has to deal with the schools in an aggressive manner, it makes sense that she is confronting me this way.* They used this speculation to

25

gain a more detailed understanding of a dilemma situation. The step of analyzing a dilemma of practice before responding to it is consistent with findings by Larson et al. (2009) on youth practitioner expertise having an appraisal step.

Hypothesizing was also a part of the process of youth workers thinking about family dilemmas. Hypothesizing involved imagining how scenarios would unfold if they chose certain actions. Youth workers often hypothesized about the consequences of possible actions in connection to their considerations. In the findings, it was found that youth workers frequently might take in account the parents' perspective. The parental perspective was identified as a consideration for three out of four of the dilemma categories. An example of a hypothesis related to parental perspective would be: *If I explain to her parents that the program is in a safe zone that gang members respect, they will be more likely to support the youth's participation because they are concerned about the child's safety*. Youth's well-being was another consideration often mentioned in terms of emotional and physical well-being, material needs, and how certain responses might impact youth. One example of a hypothesis related to youth's well-being is: *If I give him access to resources, he will be able to navigate his family problems*. Because leaders hypothesized about the youth and family, responses were likely to be more complex and multi-prong rather than simple, cut and dry answers to dilemmas based on program rules and structures (Larson & Walker, 2010). Both the speculation and hypothesizing involved in the appraisal step is consistent with Sternberg's discussion of expert processes. Speculation is similar to 'recognizing the existence of a problem, defining the nature of the problem, [and] representing information about the problem' whereas hypothesizing is similar to 'formulating a strategy for solving the problem' (Sternberg, 1998, p. 356).

Youth Workers Move Towards a Solution Which Involves a Balancing Process

Finally, youth workers in the sample moved towards a solution. Although the program and the family are two different settings, these competent youth workers attempted to balance the interests of the program with the interests of the parent in a way that best served the youth. The findings suggest that through these considerations youth workers recognized the boundaries between the family and the program as they also formulated responses. For the first dilemma category (as well as others) this involved reflecting on their role as a youth worker including what their obligations were and what the limits were on their job. (e.g. *I want to help the youth but it is not my role to intervene in family life*). Often the dilemmas required a balancing act that involved communicating with parents in ways that addressed the parental point of view yet also fulfilled program interests. For three of the categories (all except when a youth had family problems), this

ultimately led to practitioners increasing communication and interactions with parents. Bridging actions sought to minimize the divergence between the family and the program.

This balancing process that youth workers engaged in is consistent with perspectives on the ecology of developmental settings. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that:

> the capacity of a setting to function effectively as a context for development is seen to depend on the existence and nature of social interconnections between settings, including joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting about the other (p. 6).

In this study it was unclear to what extent youth workers sought joint participation with parents. However, they pursued the other two ingredients. When dilemmas arose, youth workers engaged in increasing communication, providing information to parents about the program, and attempting to construct knowledge about the family setting for themselves. The youth workers in this sample engaged in processes aimed at creating more optimal relationships between these developmental settings for youth.

Reflections on the Process Model

Youth workers face complexity at each stage of the process when dilemmas involving parents of participants arise. It, however, is important to unravel this complexity in order to understand what practitioners are doing to create positive developmental experiences for youth. It has been identified that high quality programs have a positive impact on youth and that youth workers should have certain competencies to create positive developmental settings for youth. Caring about families is one of these competencies. There is likely a process that occurs which underlies such a competency when a youth worker must react to a dilemma that arises. How does that complex process unfold? I suggest this preliminary process model as a means to encourage further exploration on what processes are occurring when a skillful youth worker faces dilemmas with parents of participants.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Although this study is not generalizable, it can begin discussions about professional development for youth workers. The research found that leaders do face dilemmas related to parents, even in programs that serve high school aged youth. Organizations currently providing literature about youth program leaders collaborating with parents can continue to do so but can incorporate more examples of the types of dilemmas that may arise. This study found that effective youth workers engage in a reflective process as well as a strategic balancing of interests to best serve youth

when such dilemmas arose. The research shows that this is an extremely complex process which is worth discussing further.

Organizations that develop lists of competencies can extend such competencies to describe how one undergoes the process of, for example, caring for families when dilemmas arise. As has been suggested for teachers (Weiss et al., 2005), this research found that effective youth workers who care for youth and families examined parents' perspective by paying attention to factors like parental goals, values, culture, and other factors that shape parental views. This suggests that organizations can support youth workers by giving them tools to react to such dilemmas. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed (2002) identified one professional development program for teachers in which facilitators in the program focused on fostering a space to identify and build on the participants' own expertise on engaging parents over the course of six sessions. One variable that improved in the intervention group compared to the control group was teacher beliefs about their own efficacy when working with parents. Perhaps youth workers could benefit from professional development training that creates a space for leaders to share, build, brainstorm, and learn about their collective expertise around everyday dilemmas involving parents.

<div align="center">Limitations and Future Research</div>

Future research can address the limitations of this study. First, there was a small sample of dilemmas. Future research could include interview questions that inquire about each of the four dilemma categories to uncover a larger sample of dilemmas. Second, there was a small number of programs looked at which made it difficult to analyze how the program characteristics may have influenced the types of dilemmas that arose. With a larger number of programs, dynamics that vary based on the specific program such as the culture of youth in a program (homogeneous or heterogeneous), program location (rural versus urban; school-based versus community based), and the program focus (theater versus leadership) could shape the family dilemmas leaders face. Third, this study did not address relationships between dilemmas, causes, appraisals, responses, and, furthermore, the outcomes. Future research could more closely examine the responses and outcomes that follow the appraisal process of youth workers. It can extend that by obtaining more details from parents and youth on dilemmas the leaders face and how they unfolded. By doing so, researchers can confirm whether youth workers speculated accurately, hypothesized parental perception correctly, enacted bridging actions that were well received by parents, and had a positive impact on youth by engaging in the aforementioned. In addition, this can further inform organizations providing professional development experiences for youth workers.

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Table 1
Characteristics of Programs in the Research

Name of Program	Location	Type	Activities	Leaders	Youth and Ethnicity
Clarkston FFA	Rural	School-based	Leadership	2 primary	77, White
Art First	City	Community-based	Art & Career Development	1 primary with 2 adults in supportive roles	16, 39% Hispanic, 32% African American, 15% White, 8% Asian, 6% recent immigrants
Youth Action	City	Community-based	Youth organizing	1 primary with 1 adult in a supportive role	20, Primarily Hispanic and African American
Les Miserables	Rural	School-based	Theater	2 primary with other adults in supportive roles	110, White
Youth Builders	Midsized City	Faith-based	Recreation	2 primary with other adults in supportive roles	20, African American
Faith in Motion	Midsized City	Faith-based	Dance	1 primary with 1 adult in supportive role	25, African American and White
Prarie Co. 4-H	Rural	Community-based	Leadership	2 primary	15, White
Media Masters	City	School-based	Video Production	2 primary with 1 adult in supportive role	22, Hispanic
Sonic Studio	City	Community-based	Music Production	2 primary	20, Primarily Hispanic and African American
Harambee	City	School-based	Community building	1 primary with 5 other adults in supportive roles	35, Primarily African American
El Concilio	City	Community-based	Service	1 primary with 1 adult volunteer in supportive role	20, Primarily Hispanic
SisterHood	City	Community-based	Conscious raising discussion group	2 primary	10, African American Girls

Table 2
Leaders in Sample

Name of Program	# of Dil	N Leader Interviews	Names of Primary Leader/s Interviewed	Primary Leader Information (age, race, years in position, degree)
Clarkston FFA	1	15	Mr. Baker, FFA Adviser Mr. Jensen, FFA Adviser	30-35, European American, 9 years, BA-Teaching 30-35, European American, 9 years, BA-Teaching
Art First	1	8	Rebecca, Manager of College and Career Program	25-30, European American, 2 years, MA-Social Work
Youth Action	6	10	Jason, Lead Organizer	25-30, Arab American, 8 years, MA-Teaching
Les Miserables	7	17	Ann, Theater Director Liz, Producer	45-50, European American, 9 years, BA-Music Education European American, 30 years, BA
Youth Builders	0	3	Karen, Program Director Charles, Director	20-25, African American, 3 years, Cosmetology School 45-50, African American, 3 years
Faith in Motion	1	6	Susan, Youth Leader	40-45, African American, 2 years, BA-Criminal Justice
Prarie Co.4-H	0	8	Lisa, Youth Development Educator	30-35, European American, 4 years, MA
Media Masters	2	10	Janna, Media Instructor Gary, Media Instructor	25-30, East Indian, 4 years, BA- Art & Technology 25-30, European American, 2 years, BA
Sonic Studio	4	15	Kanika, Studio Engineer Bonita, Employment Specialist	25-30, African American, 3 years, Recording Studio School 30-35, African American, 4 years, MA-Human Resources
Harambee	1	11	Mike, Program Director	25-30, European American, 5 years, MA-Social Work
El Concilio	2	8	Pablo, Outreach and Activities Director	30-35, Puerto Rican, 3 years, BA
SisterHood	2	14	Linda, Program Coordinator Kim, Program Coordinator	25-30, European American, 3 years, BA-Women's Studies 20-25, African American, 3 years, left position for school

Table 3
Family Dilemmas in the Sample

Name	Dilemma Category	Dilemma Title	Any Information on the Youth Available
FFA	1	How to Involve a special needs girl who has a difficult home life	Mother is blind. The family lives in a shanty.
Art First	4	Calling the mother of a special needs youth (David) to say he can't be in program	No Info Available
Youth Action	3,1,2	A youth's mother makes a scene at fundraising party when sees daughter with her boyfriend	Elena, Female, 18, Mexican American, Mother is an immigrant
	4	Conducting a protest without upsetting youths' parents	Referring to all youth in program
	1	Youth may not go to event because varying family support causes her to be unable to find babysitter	Jennifer, Female, U.S. Born, Mexican American, Mother is U.S. Born, Father's country of origin unknown
	3	Parents oppose program for different reasons	Speaking more generally
	3	Parents who are against program because they do not want their daughters hanging out with boys	No Info Available
	3	Parents feel that the program is a waste of time	No Info Available
	3	Parents won't let youth go on trip to Venezuela with the program	No Info Available
Les Miserables	1	Youth with family problems hasn't completed required tech hours	No Info Available
	2	Parent wants special privileges for their child	No Info Available
	2	Parents protest that children are asked to come when they're not needed	No Info Available

Table 3 (Continued)

	4	Mom needs to know that son's GPA falls below required minimum	Robert, Male, Freshman
	1	Girl has issues at home that disrupt her work at the program	Nicole, Female, previously had problems at home
	2	Premadonnas (and their stage parents) want special treatment	No Info Available
	4	How much personal information to share with a parent (who is also a friend) about daughter dating boy with a bad reputation	No Info Available
Faith In Motion	4	Mom says youth dating within group, which is against the program's policy	No Info Available
Media Masters	1	Youth asks leader for advice about a conflict with his parents	Rafael, Male, 18, Mexican American, US Born, lives with Father
	3	Parents don't understand the value of the program	Referring generally to youth who have parents from Mexico that may have limited education
Sonic Studio	1	Boy kicked out of house, and youth complain he's spending lots of time at program	Luis, Male, 21, Latino, US Born, Mom is Puerto Rican and Dad is 1/2 Puerto Rican/1/2 Jamaican
	1,3	Boy with Problems at Home-parents separated	Darryl, Male, 18, African American, US Born
	3	Parent concerned the program is in a neighborhood with gangs	No Info Available
Harambee	2	Mother concerned when leader is considering firing a youth	Youth had previously presented problems in the program
El Concilo	3	Conservative Relatives Oppose a Youth's Participation	Angela, Female, 21, Mexican American female
	3	Conservative Parents Take Youth out of the Program because oppose participation	No Info Available

Table 3 (Continued)

| SisterHood | 2 | One youth's family used her fundraising money to pay bills; other youth complain | No Info Available |
| | 1 | Girl confides in leader that she might be pregnant and cannot tell Mom | Monique, Female, 14, African American, US Born, Mother born in US, Father born in Nigeria, Mother is a Jehova Witness, Lives with her mother |

Table 4

Dilemma Situations Organized By Category

Dilemma Category	Situations in Primary Dilemma Category: The Most Relevant Ones are Used in the Descriptions of the Findings
1) Problems at Home that Became a Concern to the Leader	1) Boy kicked out of house, and youth complain he's spending lots of time at program 2) Girl has issues at home that disrupt her work at the program 3) Youth asks leader for advice about a conflict with his parents 4) Boy with Problems at Home-parents separated 5) Girl confides in leader that she might be pregnant and cannot tell Mom -How to Involve a special needs girl who has a difficult home life -Youth may not go to event because varying family support causes her to be unable to find babysitter -Youth with family problems hasn't completed required tech hours
2) Parental Demands Are Incongruent with Program Norms or Functioning	1) Parent wants special privileges for their child 2) Parents protest that children are asked to come when they're not needed 3) Premadonnas (and their stage parents) want special treatment 4) Mother concerned when leader is considering firing a youth -One youth's family used her fundraising money to pay bills; other youth complain
3) Parents did not Support or Opposed the Youth's Participation	1) A youth's mother makes a scene at fundraising party when sees daughter with her boyfriend 2) Parents oppose program for different reasons 3) Parents who are against program because they do not want their daughters hanging out with boys 4) Parents feel that the program is a waste of time 5) Parents won't let youth go on trip to Venezuela with the program 6) Parents don't understand the value of the program 7) Parent concerned the program is in a neighborhood with gangs 8) Conservative Relatives Oppose a Youth's Participation 9) Conservative Parents Take Youth out of the Program because oppose participation
4) Communicating Information to the Parents about their Child	1) Calling the mother of a special needs youth (David) to say he can't be in program 2) Conducting a protest without upsetting youths' parents 3) Mom needs to know that son's GPA falls below required minimum 4) How much personal information to share with a parent (who is also a friend) about daughter dating boy with a bad reputation -Mom says youth dating within group, which is against the program's policy

Table 5
Major Findings

Dilemma Category	Considerations	Central Theme
1) Problems at Home that Became a Concern to the Leader	-The youth's material needs -The youth's behavior and emotional state/needs -The possible roles that the youth worker should or should not play such as being an adviser, listener, encourager, or someone the youth is dependent on	Leaders' struggle to understand what's outside of their control and tried to identify helpful tools within their control
2) Parental Demands Are Incongruent with Program Norms or Functioning	-The parents' perception of the issue. -The impact fulfilling parental demands would have on the program	One must negotiate the interests of the parents and the interests of the program.
3) Parents did not Support or Opposed the Youth's Participation	- Family cultural values such as gender expectations and relations. -Parental misconceptions of youth programs that may include the purpose of youth programs in general or the politics/activities of the specific youth program. -The importance parents placed on academics. -The parents concern about youth's safety, especially when traveling to and from the program.	Leaders explored parental reasons for being against a program while respecting parental concerns.
4) Communicating Information to the Parents about their Child	-Parents' point of view (to understand how the parent may react to the information) -Youth's well being. -Program rules, regulations, or procedural issues. -Ethical issues.	Communicating information to parents could be delicate and emotionally taxing.

APPENDIX INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Questions on Dilemmas in Leader Interview Protocols

Initial Interview

I want to understand the process you go through as you decide what is right to do and good to be in your role as a youth leader. I'll be asking you questions about specific worries you have or situations you face, how you handle them, and why. So as you go about your work, it would be helpful if you paid attention to [or noted] some of these situations as they arise so that you can share them with me when we talk.

Phone Interview and Mid-Interview

Now I want to ask about the kinds of <u>challenges or dilemmas</u> that have come up for you lately. What have you <u>worried</u> about lately? What kinds of situations or decisions have you faced in the context of [name of program]? [Distinguish from internal aspect within the program and external factors from the organization.]

Probe: Tell me what the situation was.

Probe: How did you decide how to handle this situation, and why?

AW: Tell me about your decision-making process.

Probe: What other adults did you talk to or get support from about this issue?

AW: What kind of resource or support systems did you draw on?

Probe: How did you feel about that?

Final Interview

1. As we've talked about, leaders inevitably face challenges in the course of their work with youth. I'd like you talk about the challenges, obstacles or frustrations that have come up for you during the program. Thinking back, what were the more difficult situations or decisions that you faced in the context of [name of program]?

Probe: Tell me what happened.

Probe: How did you decide how to handle this situation, and why?

AW: Tell me about your decision-making process.

Probe: What other adults did you talk to or get support from about this issue?

AW: What kind of resource or support systems did you draw on?

Probe: How did you feel about that?

2. Are you satisfied with how you handled the situation(s)?

AW: Is there anything you would do differently?

Follow Up Interviews

Programs differ a lot in how they relate to youth's parents or guardians. Some make a big effort to be engaged with them; others, for various good reasons, don't do as much or don't do anything to engage parents.

a. First, what is (or was) the <u>philosophy</u> of your program in regards to youth's parents and guardians? How do you think about them? What are your goals if any for relating to them?

b. What if anything do you do to (1) communicate with them or (2) include them?

c. What kind of response do you get? What are the issues and challenges that arise in trying to engage with youth's parents or guardians?

d. If a youth's parents wants (or wanted) to be involved in program activities in some way, how would you approach that? *AW:* What (informal) guidelines do you follow regarding how you do or do not want parents involved?

e. If a youth wanted to participate in your program, but his or her parents were opposed, how would you approach that?