Billig, *Cogent Psychology* (2019), 6: 1704610
https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2019.1704610

cogent psychology

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Incorporating volunteer youth in emergency teams: The effect of the cognitive-emotional spiral

Miriam Billig*

Received: 18 July 2019
Accepted: 10 December 2019
First Published: 15 December 2019

*Corresponding author: Miriam Billig, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ariel University; Eastern R&D Regional Center, Israel.
E-mail: billigm@ariel.ac.il

Reviewing editor:
Juliet Wakefield, Psychology, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK

Additional information is available at the end of the article

Abstract: This study examines the influence processes of a program that incorporated youth into community emergency teams (CETs), exploring the overall repercussions from a holistic point of view. The study was based on participant observation and in-depth interviews with youth CET members and their parents, and with adult CET organizers and members. Findings show that the program improved the community's emergency response preparations, strengthened communal empowerment in the settlement, and strengthened the self-efficacy and self-esteem of the participating youth. The positive reinforcements received from both small and large successes, from the adult participants' feedback and the responses of the surrounding community, elicited strong feelings among youth and adults, which in turn led to insights that changed their mutual perceptions, and contributed to the cognitive-emotional development of the adolescents' identity.

Subjects: Development Studies, Environment, Social Work, Urban Studies; Social Sciences; Behavioral Sciences

Keywords: Community emergency team; youth volunteering; youth organizing; communal empowerment; self–efficacy; youth civic engagement

1. Introduction

Small, secluded, rural settlements must deal with their remoteness from public response centers, since the size of such settlements does not justify the maintenance of basic services within them, such as health services, fire and rescue services, and police forces. The absence of such services is especially acute during emergencies and disasters that often strike swiftly and without warning.



Miriam Billig

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Miriam Billig, (Ph.D), Sociology and Urban and Regional Planning. Her research focuses on the field of Environmental Psychology: place identity, place attachment and sense of place and quality of life; community development and change; religious faith and living under pressure and threat; coping with displacement and the sense of loss.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The research findings are especially important for community managers and youth counselors who engage in non-formal education. The study enables holistic observation of the consequences of incorporating youth in the CET program in a small and isolated communal settlement. The findings show that the program has improved the community's emergency plan, strengthened communal empowerment in the settlement, and strengthened the self-efficacy and self-esteem of the participating youth.

cogent oa

© 2019 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

Therefore, these remote communities must prepare in advance and arrange an accessible and skilled team that is on continuous stand-by and comes into operation during such hours of need. The community's functionality during this precious time span greatly depends upon its ability to organize and on its preparedness to manage an emergency.

Another difficulty which characterizes such settlements is the low supply of extracurricular activities available to teenagers and the lack of after-school challenges for them. Small settlements find difficulty in supplying the needs of settlement youth, especially when it comes to those youth perceived by peers as socially unacceptable at school, which may lead to frustration, boredom, and even vandalism (Friedman & Billig, 2018).

One form of volunteer work in community settlements is the community emergency team (CET), comprised of residents of the same community who are trained to face emergencies in their place of residence. In the past few decades emergency teams have been established in Israel, mainly in the periphery and in settlements near national borders. Barak is an example of one such secluded settlement in which a community emergency team was founded. The team comprises adult residents, most of them with families, who volunteered to contribute their skills and time to this team.

An emergency event that took place at the end of the summer of 2009 in the settlement on a mundane day, during which a child from the settlement went missing, propelled adolescents to participate in a think tank and search team. Post factum, this formative event revealed much about the power and willingness of the youth of the community to aid in emergencies. In 2010, a decision was made to start a youth community emergency team (YCET) project in the settlement. The community project was initiated in collaboration with the regional council, the Department of Social Services, and the Community Work Unit, and is a primary attempt to incorporate teenagers into the community emergency response preparations and add them to the adult emergency team.

Twelve adolescents, aged 14–17, were chosen from 25 candidates who requested to join the program. The selection was based on criteria of maturity, responsibility, and skill sets that could contribute to the group, including knowledge of technology, languages, familiarity with the environment, the ability to navigate, and good manual dexterity. Success in studies was not a criterion; students spanning the full gamut of academic achievement from gifted students to relatively weak students were included. Social status at school was also not part of the selection criteria, and some of the candidates were considered socially unacceptable at school. A professional training program was prepared to train the selected youth for this role, including a four month program of three-hour, bi-weekly training sessions.

Recently, the YCET program has become highly popular in distant and secluded peripheral settlements in Israel. However, no evaluation research has been conducted and no holistic perspective of this program's effects has been presented. Moreover, the interpersonal and emotional relationships between the people involved in the program have not been examined, neither has their influence on the CET organization, the community or the youth.

2. Empowering youth through volunteer work

Volunteering—"a helping action of an individual that is valued by him or her, and yet is not aimed directly at material gain, or mandated or coerced by others" (Van Til, 1988, 6)—might be motivated by altruistic motives to help others, self-interest, or by the combination of egoistic and self-interest motives (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981; Shye, 2014). Research has shown that younger people tend to be motivated by the opportunity to enhance social networking and skills and value their contribution to a specific cause (Rochester, Paine, Howlett, & Zimmeck, 2016). According the role identity model, engagement in volunteering work enhances commitment to the organization, which in turn increases involvement in its activities and leads to a change in the volunteer's role identity and self-concept (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Marta & Pozzi, 2008).

Adolescence is identified by the formation of personal and collective identity, while cultural and social context have a central role in developing a coherent self-identity (Erikson, 1982; Larsen & Larsen, 2004). Volunteerism supports cognitive, emotional and moral development, and gives young people the opportunity to appraise their own competencies and thus to further construct their identity. Studies on voluntary service by young people have shown positive effects on socialization, belonging to the community, political participation (Marta & Pozzi, 2008) and formation of social norms (Youniss & Yates, 1997). Crocetti, Erentaitė, and Žukauskienė (2014) identified a positive correlation between social-cognitive identity styles in adolescence, positive youth development and civic engagement through volunteering. Many studies have reported improvements in self-concept, including self-esteem and career identity, as the effects of volunteer activities on adolescents (Kim, 2016; Lee, 2009; Park, 2010). Moreover, youth volunteering decreases the probability of negative behaviors such as school absenteeism or drug problems (Cicognani, Klimstra, & Goossens, 2014; Wilson, 2000).

3. Incorporating youth in community involvement

A sense of community (SoC) and community involvement mean active engagement "in issues that affect people's lives and impact the larger community" (Talò, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2014, 1). Researchers emphasize the importance of psychological involvement in the positive development of youth (Adachi & Willoughby, 2014), in the empowerment and positive strengthening of their self-perception and in fostering their learning motivation (Delgado & Staples, 2008; Khan, 2013).

Youth involvement in the community has cognitive-emotional repercussions that also manifest in the lives of the adolescents themselves. Those who volunteer in their local communities have stronger bonds with the community, stronger determination to solve problems, and a stronger sense of social responsibility (Lee, 2009; Park, 2010). Moreover, youth volunteering was found to increase a sense of community, promote pro-social orientations such as altruism, cultivate democratic citizenship and improve volunteers' social well-being (Cicognani, Mazzoni, Albanesi, & Zani, 2015; Kim, 2016, 2016a).

Youth-adult relationships based on mutual trust and respect may be powerful promoters of organizational, community, and social change, strengthen adolescents' sense of security, resilience, and critical thinking, and advance their social well-being (Eisman, Stoddard, Bauermeister, Caldwell, & Zimmerman, 2016; Krauss, Collura, & Zeldin, 2014; Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2015; Spencer, Gowdy, Drew, & Rhodes, 2019). Researchers specify core components that must come into play to create an effective youth-adult partnership: joint decision making; unjudgmental and egalitarian support by adults who act as natural youth "mentors"; reciprocal activity. These components enable them to work together towards a common goal and forming engagements through meetings with community stakeholders (Akiva, Cortina, & Smith, 2014; Blanchet-Cohen, Manolson, & Shaw, 2014; Lerner, Lerner, & Benson, 2011; Mueller, Lewin-Bizan, & Urban, 2011).

Awareness of the identification of the role of adolescents in the community and acknowledging them as an asset and a resource of the community's human capital has contributed to the development of the "Youth Community Organizing" (YCO) model. According to the YCO participatory approach, young people become the "organizing core" of community activities, are placed in leadership positions and are expected to lead for positive community change, while still receiving support and guidance from accompanying adults (Delgado & Staples, 2008). The application of the model is manifested through the incorporation of youth into a wide range of structured and supervised volunteer activities (Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010; Chiessi, Cicognani, & Sonn, 2010; Ginwright, 2010; Shah, 2011). Preliminary studies on YCO programs show a positive effect on participants' development, and indicate that such programs may improve adolescents' abilities to cope with challenging personal and family situations by taking responsibility towards changing the existing situation (Ginwright, 2010; Shah, 2011).

YCO and other civic and community engagement programs for adolescents turn youth into a central power source that affords them key roles and acknowledges their abilities, rights, and fields of responsibility (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010; Smith, 2012). Active participation

by youth in the community has been found to be an important tool for promoting the development of critical awareness, political involvement, empowerment, and good citizenship (Conner, 2011; Nicholas, Eastman-Mueller, & Barbich, 2019), as well as for recognizing their own abilities as leaders during a crisis (Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013; Sherrod et al., 2010; Smith, 2012).

4. Incorporating volunteer youth into emergency teams

Because emergencies are usually local, decision makers have become more conscious of the special role adolescents play in emergencies (Schafer, Carroll, Haynes, & Abrams, 2008). Thus, according to the approach that calls for "participatory disaster risk prevention", the involvement of the community's adolescents alongside its adults in preparing for and preventing disasters is crucial. This approach encourages including all members of the community in emergency management regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status, and in planning, consulting, and decision-making on all disaster-related aspects (Fernandez & Shaw, 2013; Turnbull, Sterrett, & Hilleboe, 2013; Head, 2011).

In implementing this method, various programs have been developed to train and incorporate youth into the field of emergency action in many countries around the world, including Canada, India, and the US (McGill, 2014; Newport & Jeyanth, 2003). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (2014), US Department of Education, and the Red Cross have developed a strategy for recruiting and training communities to educate children and adolescents in the fields of emergency management and preparedness. These educational programs address the three stages of an emergency—preparation prior to the emergency, reaction during the emergency, and recovery in its wake. An established and recognized program is the Community Emergency Response Team youth program (FEMA & American Red Cross, 2014).

From the operational aspect of the emergency response preparations, youth contribute to the operations in ways that adults do not. These contributions include knowledge, geographical familiarity, innovative ideas and creativity, as well as energy, enthusiasm, and easy access to learning-enabling communication technology. Adolescents may also be more practical in emergencies and show greater courage and resourcefulness as well as leadership skills and a great deal of independence (Krauss et al., 2014; Powell, Black, & Smith, 2012; Ronan & Johnston, 2005; Thomas & Florencia, 2009; Wisner, 2006). Adolescents may also perceive the situation in a different way to adults, placing emphasis on many issues that an adult might overlook (Bartlett, 2008). Although awareness of the significance of youth as human capital in the management of emergencies has grown during recent years, the local applications of these programs remain limited (Fernandez & Shaw, 2013; Matsuoka & Shaw, 2012).

Incorporation of volunteering youth in emergency teams contributes to their sense of collective responsibility and reinforces their social involvement. It develops adolescents' emotional connections with the community and family and affords them mental security and resilience (Billig & Lebovitz, 2014; Krauss et al., 2014), contributes to their leadership skills (Powell et al., 2012) and may shape their future position in society (Thomas & Florencia, 2009).

The literature on volunteer youth in the community and their incorporation into emergency teams has focused primarily on presenting the various benefits of dichotomous sequence between the individual and the collective levels. These depictions disregard the mutual effects and their important contribution to increasing motivation to volunteer and to personal youth empowerment. This case study attempts to present a holistic picture of an ongoing cognitive-emotional spiral of youth-community relationships based on the flood of mutual feelings and insights that have arisen following the YCET project.

5. The current study

The study was conducted in a small community settlement) 450 families, 1800 residents) named Barak, on the eastern border of Israel. The study focused on the participants from the 2013 YCET course that took place in the settlement.

The aim of the study was to understand the overall effect of the experimental program on incorporating adolescent volunteers into the CET team of the community settlement. The study focused on three central questions: What was the contribution of the youth to the emergency management response preparations on an operational level? How did the addition of youth to the community emergency team affect the fabric of youth-adult-community relations? And what were the consequences of participation in this program on personal youth empowerment, and on their connection to the settlement in which they reside?

This study unravels the inner cognitive-emotional processes that motivate adolescents and adults as they volunteer, and the effects of these processes on the program's level of success.

6. Methods

6.1. Participants

Eighteen in-depth interviews were held between October and December of 2014: four interviews with adult CET members (males); 10 interviews with participants in the YCET course, (3 girls and 5 boys, (66% of the participants)); and four interviews with participants' parents (3 females, 1 male). The youth were aged between 14 and 17, and the age of the adults was 38–55. Among the interviewees, 72% were secular, 28% traditional; 73% born in Israel, and 27% in the CIS.

6.2. Procedure

In the first step, two in-depth interviews were conducted: one with the head of the YCET course, Noga Friedman, who planned the program, and one with the CEO of the Barak settlement. The interviewees revealed the aims of the program, as well as technical details related to the procedure for screening and accepting candidates. They were asked to describe impressions from the program, define the successes or failures, and focus on unexpected events that occurred during the program. The descriptions included experiences from their point of view, but also from the perspective of different individuals who were related to the program. Documents related to the YCET course were also displayed.

The second step was based on three main subjects arising from step one testimonies. Participants were asked to address the following questions in detail: "In your opinion, did the youth contribute to the professional operation of the CET organization?", "How would you describe the YCET relationship with the community?" and "What was the impact of the YCET program on the youth?"

The interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face, except for one interview that was conducted over the phone. The study involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews, during which original questions were dynamically changed in accordance with topics raised by the interviewee. Prior to conducting the interviews, approval by the University Ethics Committee was obtained as well as parental consent for adolescents. The interviewees were asked to address their own personal experiences, attitudes, and feelings relating to the YCET volunteer program. The interviewees were chosen randomly. Interviews, lasting between one and two hours, took place in the interviewer's home or at the CET office. All the interview transcripts were analyzed, followed by categorization of the elicited information, where each category signified a salient issue raised in several of the interviews. No contradictions or disputes were found between the portrayals given by adolescents, parents, or adult CET members. However, there were differences in emphasis between them, some of which complemented each other and provided a broad picture of the program's implications.

6.3. Analysis of ethnography

The study was based on an interactional worldview that views the volunteer activities of youth in the community as an ongoing process that includes mutual influences on the organization, the society, and the adolescents themselves. The interviews were analyzed according to the Grounded

Theory systematic methodology as follows: 1. A meticulous reading of all interviews and their division into "meaningful units" followed by identifying, sorting, and organizing the interviews that were identified as meaningful units and corresponded with the research topic and goals, and subsequently comparing between said units in order to find similarities and differences. 2. Shaping strategies, defining criteria for categories, and dividing meaningful units according to these strategies. 3. Creating a hierarchy between strategies and locating central themes, thereby creating a link between strategies so that the researcher can formulate an explanation for the phenomenon and answer the questions raised in the study. 4. Creating a theoretical concept to accompany existing theoretical models.

6.4. Research credibility

Four actions were taken to strengthen research credibility (Smith, 2003): 1. Maintaining and preserving a chain of evidence (interview texts, drafts of the various stages of analysis, and a research log that documented the process). 2. A multi-level analysis with any preliminary conclusions subject to change up to the written finalization of the findings. 3 Random selection of interviewees by the researcher. 4. Establishing a comfortable environment and building trust between the interviewer and interviewees. Trust was determined by the request from the interviewee to first speak freely about himself and about living in the Barak settlement, and then to address the topic of volunteering.

7. Results

7.1. Improvements to professional operations

7.1.1. Fresh and creative thought

The main contribution of the youth to the CET, according to adult and adolescent interviewees, is their advantage as out-of-the-box thinkers. In the words of the head of logistics, "As smart as we think we are, sometimes a child's way of thinking can change the course of things." The interviewees were like-minded in thinking that youth contribute greatly to brainstorming and excel in improvising solutions differently than do adults. During a brainstorming session seeking methods to get residents to update needed details, the adolescents came up with ideas such as opening a booth near the settlement's pool, changing the form's wording to make filling it out simpler and more convenient, and adolescents going door-to-door to help residents fill out the form.

One teenager described the contribution of youth to the joint thought process as follows: "Young people are more innovative, they can come up with brilliant ideas, they're exposed to so many things and they sometimes know a lot more". Working alongside adolescents has revealed that their lack of experience in managing emergencies is an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, because to them, nothing is obvious.

7.1.2. High levels of technology proficiency

Because there are few emergencies in Barak, work with the youth centered round emergency preparation during routine days and during drills. The adolescents built an internet infrastructure that had lists with residents' personal details and vital information on special needs populations and uploaded the information to the "cloud", where everyone could access it, so that during emergencies the required data would be available from anywhere that had "cloud" access. As the CET vice-chairman describes:

> We used whomever specialized in any field: We turned a Russian-speaking girl into a translator. A logistics team created an updated resident database. To do that, the head of the team was aided by two teenage girls who fed the data into the computer.

Other adult CET members noted that incorporating youth has improved CET operation, in both planning and executing activities. Placing faith in youth has proven useful and afforded the emergency team with innovation, technological skills, availability, and mobility.

7.1.3. Availability and mobility

Youth proved more available during emergencies as well, as they spend most of their days and nights in the settlement, and thus can aid the adults. Youth have an advantage over many of the adults because they can move quickly from place to place. This mobility is important during emergencies—an advantage that wasn't thought of before. Team members often had to run between various locations within the settlement. Additionally, some areas in the settlement are more familiar to adolescents than to adults. As the head of CET logistics described:

> In our drill, we simulated the destruction of the youth movement club, a place that was entirely unknown to me, personally. I used adolescents to locate the entrances, the fuse boxes, and the possible exits accessible on foot. They did a good job; the drill changed my perception of them.

One of the boys described:

> I was very excited during the drill, […] When it began, I was running as fast as I could. It turned out that I was the first to arrive at the field to provide status reports. I knew the place better than the adults […] It was a great feeling […] I understood we really can help!

The inter-generational encounter presented both adults and adolescents with a mirror image, and each group became more aware of the advantages of the other group as well as discovering its own abilities and limitations. Adults found their own limitations in relation to the youth, their appreciation for them changed, and they showed willingness to count on them in real-time situations. Alongside appreciation gained by the youth for the adults' experience, their accumulative experience was mainly one of personal success: by virtue of being chosen for the job, of their own success in performing it, and of the positive feedback adults gave them. The youth enjoyed living up to the trust that the adults had placed in them, and as their self-esteem grew, so did their self-confidence and desire to prove themselves in other aspects of settlement life.

7.2. Strengthening community capital

7.2.1. Environmental commitment

The CET training has given values such as youth responsibility towards their environment and training towards coping with abnormal events in the field. Their availability in the settlement and their inclination to spend their time out of their homes have given CET youth an advantage in the primary identification of abnormal events as well as the ability to react to scenarios quickly. One such example can be seen in this testimony by the CET chairwoman:

> A boy asked the following question during the course, "Who'll even listen to me during an emergency? I'm just a boy." And the CET vice-chairman answered him, "People will listen to whomever reacts to an emergency." One day, that same boy left his house and saw that seven trees in his yard were on fire. His sister and mother, who were in the house, panicked, as did the neighbor. The boy evacuated people from their homes and then called the fire department. By the time they arrived the fire was completely under control. After the event, that boy told me excitedly that what he had learned in the course truly helped him.

After the course, the bond between CET youth and settlement leadership strengthened, and they began cooperating in order to receive information and aid in resolving problems that arose in the settlement and in the community. After someone in the settlement attempted suicide, the youth were asked to block the way to prying eyes. As leaders, CET youth became role models for other teenagers in the settlement and encouraged them to behave in a positive manner.

When describing the effects of incorporating youth into the CET, most youth and adult interviewees emphasized that following the program there was no more vandalism in the settlement. Though CET adolescents themselves were not the perpetrators, their involvement in the project

created an atmosphere that discouraged other youth from committing acts of vandalism. As one boy pointed out, "CET adolescents can calm down non-CET adolescents. They'll listen to me." CET youth have testified that they became more sensitive when it comes to identifying troubled adolescents in the settlement and have become a significant agent to which children and teenagers may turn, directly and without restrictions or worries. As the settlement's community coordinator put it, "CET youth lend an ear where we might not". A girl mentioned identifying the needs of adults who require help around the settlement, who were aided by adolescents. She, for example, speaks Russian, and thus helped improve the communication between the settlement offices and its Russian-speaking population.

Youth that participated in the CET course became more positive; this change was also manifested in their attitudes towards their family and parents, following which, their parents and their extended environment also treated these adolescents better.

7.2.2. A sense of altruism

Adolescents have mentioned the changes they have undergone in their willingness to contribute to the greater good. Residents have described a sense of pride in the settlement over the fact that youth aren't merely "self-involved", but also give and care for others. The adolescents who volunteered in the CET developed volunteering habits, and some continue to volunteer in other places in and out of school following the program, in a variety of fields. As a girl from the program described, "CET activity set a very positive wheel in motion [...] the personal commitment school program required 60 hours of volunteer work, but I did double that—I volunteered with holocaust survivors ... "

CET youth have aided with the organization of community events in the settlement. Some have volunteered as instructors in the Betar Youth Movement in the settlement, thus gaining the respect of both adolescents and adults. The adolescents have said that their CET training provided them with the tools to motivate others, and so, when the requirement calls for youth to volunteer around the settlement, they can volunteer themselves, motivate other adolescents, and coordinate the activity. Following rumors of the course and activity around it, parents and adolescents who have yet to join the CET asked to join the program.

The desire around the settlement to volunteer in the CET has risen, and volunteers have become "the settlement's elite youth", as the CET vice chairman says, "People came to me, asking me to put their kid in the CET; the circle of involvement and caring is expanding".

7.2.3. Local patriotism

The program for incorporating youth into the CET represents an approach that calls to invest in a "select group". The professional collaboration between youth and adults has changed teenagers' attitudes toward the settlement, as evident in many interviews. One girl told us that merely being chosen to volunteer in the CET alongside adults made her feel important and needed, "I didn't treat them as adults, but as part of the team. My attitude was about being together." And another girl added, "I was really moved. I never thought teenagers meant anything here in the settlement." According to the interviewees, these sentiments were expressed every time they encountered adult residents. As one girl explained:

> When we went from house to house to update the residents' emergency contact details, ... as soon as I said I was YCET, I immediately had a special status ... I felt like people took me more seriously.

The adolescents mentioned they feel responsible for the settlement by virtue of their inclusion in the program, and considering how much it had invested in them and the trust it had placed in them. One boy stated:

> After the course, I felt like taking part in building the community, being responsible for the community, maintaining order, and improving it. We adopted a sense of local patriotism; I began using language like 'our settlement', 'my settlement'. It's not obvious.

"Work relations" formed between CET youth: The appreciation and praise adolescents receive for their work with CET have strengthened their new status in the settlement and tightened their emotional link to their place of residence, leading them to exhibit more empathy and caring towards the settlement, the community, and their families. As a result, adolescents have sought out new tasks and challenges that would allow them to contribute to the greater good. Adults realized CET adolescents can be relied on, reinforcing their mutual collaboration and increasing mutual trust. This realization encouraged better communication between adolescents and adults and led to a candid and open relationship they didn't previously have. It also intensified sentiments of a fate shared with the rest of the residents in the settlement and with it a sense of pride in belonging to it.

7.3. The contribution to youth empowerment

7.3.1. Self-discovery

Adolescents mention how the YCET project enriched their knowledge and provided them with a different perspective on a variety of fields that were previously unknown to them but now interested them. For example, they admitted that before the course they were not aware of the importance of organization and logistics for emergency response preparations, nor did they know that the subject could be studied academically. Others were excited by the field of medicine following their course training. This experience enabled them to make decisions regarding their chosen course of study, military career, and future profession.

The adolescents attributed a great deal of importance to the spokesperson training in the course, in which they practiced standing before an audience, and sending messages during emergencies. Even the shyest of members learned how to speak in front of an audience during their training, and discovered they were capable of and even enjoy this performance. Some have developed these capabilities when instructing in their youth movement, or in school or the army.

CET activity allowed youth to discover new skills they were not aware of before joining the YCET. This aspect came up in the following depiction by one of the boys, "[The project] mostly gave a lot of confidence to [...] who didn't have much, who didn't stand out or talk as much. This place brought some [teenagers] out of their shells. People became confident, realized they could talk, and that their opinions matter." CET activities tested, for example, their ability to successfully cope with pressure at work; some adolescents found that they perform even better under such circumstances, others discovered their ability and gift for thinking outside of the box, and some discovered their leadership skills, as manifested through their improved communication abilities, authoritativeness, and other characteristics.

Parents and some youth mentioned more investment in school studies as a result of participation in the YCET program. As one of the girls described:

> It changed me completely. I was quite a weak student, [...] someone who was shy and introverted [...] knowing that I was chosen for the program (maybe because I speak Russian) [...] it strengthened my self-confidence. After the course, I made new friends. I have taken responsibility for myself and for our surroundings. CET set things and gave me a push.

7.3.2. Strengthening their social status

YCET activity has garnered social connections among CET participants. As a boy who participated in the course described, "My best friends are the guys from the CET. Those are the people I am closest

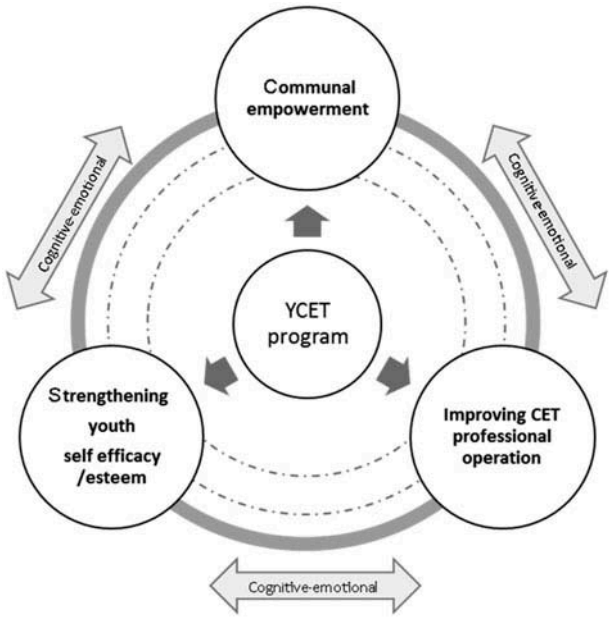


Figure 1. Influence spheres and a spiral process of community empowerment achieved by incorporating adolescents into the community emergency team.

to since then, because we shared the experience." The mother of one CET teenager pointed out that his involvement in the YCET had contributed to his ability to fit in socially with other teenagers in the settlement, "He knew he was a very smart but not social person; he used to shut himself at home … The project gave him the ability to overcome this obstacle". Another mother described, "My daughter used to be a very lonely girl; she completely changed that year."

The testimonies of adolescents who participated in the program revealed that they felt calmer and less anxious about facing emergencies after their CET program training; that their preparedness for an emergency gave them an advantage over other teenagers and strengthened their social status. Over time, the adolescents who took part in the course became a close-knit group and began spending time with each other beyond CET activities. The CET volunteer work created positive peer pressure that encouraged adolescents to become active and put their minds together to think about what they could do in, and contribute to, the settlement and the community, and so further established their social status in the settlement. Being a part of the emergency team gave all volunteer adolescents an equal opportunity to find and execute their innate potential and discover skills they were not aware of. Volunteering alongside adults, gave them an opportunity to receive significant reinforcements they may not have received from their teenage peers. This is especially significant with respect to talented adolescents with low self-esteem and relatively week social skills. Evidently, success on one level, such as the discovery of personal skills, alongside positive feedback from adults, encourages self-efficacy and may increase adolescents' self-confidence.

A model (Figure 1) was constructed from the ethnographic analysis of the in-depth interviews, presenting a youth empowerment process in three dimensions: increasing the efficiency of the community emergency response preparations, empowering the community, and empowering CET adolescents. The model provides an image of a comprehensive system whose parts interact with each other, and every dimension affects and empowers the others, both cognitively and emotionally.

8. Discussion

In a post-modern age that emphasizes individualism, alienation, and achievement, community volunteer work is not the obvious choice. Nevertheless, we are witnessing a growing phenomenon that sees both adults and adolescents volunteering for the greater good, in social movements and governmental emergency organizations. The case of Barak enables a holistic observation from the

perspectives of the CET organization, the community and the youth, on the consequences of incorporating youth in the CET program in a small, isolated communal settlement.

The findings show that the program improved emergency teams, both in planning and in practice, strengthened communal empowerment in the settlement, and strengthened the self-efficacy and self-esteem of the adolescent participants. Like a ripple effect, introducing adolescents into emergency teams led to unexpected changes. Beyond their contribution to the operational improvement of the emergency response preparations, it turned out that having adolescents work side-by-side with adults blurred the boundaries between the world of adults and that of the youth in the settlement, while also preserving and redesigning them. It encouraged better communication and promoted sincerity and openness between adults and adolescents that did not previously exist, as well as strengthening their sense of shared fate. Professional appreciation and empathy and the new discourse of understanding, esteem, and mutual respect replaced a discourse rife with rights and duties. At the same time, the incorporation of adolescents into CETs forced adults to set a personal example and take their CET role seriously, while also strengthening adolescents' self-awareness of their own abilities and their connection to the settlement.

Apparently, besides the influence on both adult and adolescent program participants and their ability to manage a crisis, the YCET program also had far wider implications that concerned the overall cultural-social discourse in the settlement. The change in adult-adolescent relationships was not restricted to CET activity alone, but also induced a positive transformation in the familial inter-generational connection, in the attitudes of youth toward the rest of the community, and in CET adolescents' attitude towards their peers in the settlement. Following the recruitment of adolescents into CETs in Barak, the settlement developed an atmosphere of joint responsibilities that included both adults and adolescents. Additionally, the self-image of CET youth improved, and their connection to their settlement became stronger. These changes are the result of a process beginning with a structured initiative that led to spontaneous chain reactions which strengthened mutual connections and relations between residents.

The emotional aspect was found to be a central factor in setting change processes in motion, both in the functionality of CET youth and their relationships with adults in the settlement. Evidently, by being incorporated into the program, adolescents experienced emotional empowerment which affected them personally, but also influenced their understanding and attitudes towards the collective. The study reveals the importance of encouraging youth to achieve "little successes" which strengthen their self-efficacy and self-esteem. Moreover, the positive feedback and emotional support adolescents received from adults during their joint activity in the emergency team and the community was also important. The positive reinforcements received from the small and large successes, from the adult participants' feedback and the responses of the surrounding community, elicited strong feelings among youth and adults, which in turn led to insights that changed their mutual perceptions, and contributed to the adolescents' cognitive-emotional development of identity.

Such encouragement, which does not come from within the formal educational frameworks but rather spontaneously from members of the community, has had a profound effect on the adolescents. These have all been motivating factors that transformed the settlement's communal social capital and empowered the adolescents themselves. Studies have indicated that volunteer work in governmental emergency organizations and youth movements may evoke feelings of altruism, resourcefulness, and leadership. An important finding to be emphasized is that when volunteers participate in the emergency response preparations of their own communities, the experience strengthens additional emotions. Emergency preparations concern the basis of consciousness regarding adolescents' overall sense of affiliation, and consequently, feelings of empathy toward the people they live with, a sense of community, and strong sentiments toward their place of residence. Preparation for emergencies calls for experience with crises—for which CETs must practice and be on call, knowing they may be called to an emergency at any moment. In addition,

any emergency in the settlement is a catalyst that floods the shared emotions and experiences that become embedded in the community over time until the next event. Therefore, ongoing CET activities create constant tension and excitement, as the connection to the settlement and its community develops not only during active hours, but throughout the day. Participation in CETs evokes feelings of collective responsibility in adolescents toward the environment in which they live, and a "continuous sense of community" (Talò et al., 2014). This activity empowers youth and creates an emotional bond with the program participants.

8.1. Limitations

Despite the positive effects YCET has had on the Barak community settlement—as extensively documented in this article—this study did not deal with the content of the course taken by these adolescents nor the methods it used and how well they affected the success of the program, all of which are subjects worthy of further research. Moreover, this study depicts a phenomenon as observed in one settlement over only two cycles and calls for the examination of other cases in more settlements in order to test the effects of settlement size and population characteristics on the success of the program. Additionally, this study was held at a time when the settlement was not under any substantial security threat, and findings on children's functionality may be different during a more stressful time, security-wise. Presumably, as in any sorting process when screening program applicants, some disappointed adolescents were not accepted. This study lacks interviews with these rejected applicants as well as with youth who were not interested in joining the program; further research is warranted.

9. Conclusions

The study reveals several positive effects created following the incorporation of adolescents into the YCET program and shows that youth who joined the program not only volunteered in emergencies, but also became active in the settlement and connected to the community.

Acknowledgements
To Noga Fridman (Ph.D) for conducting interviews and collecting data for this research; to the Eastern R&D Center for financial support.

Funding
This work was supported by the Eastern R&D Center [1-2010-1].

Author details
Miriam Billig
E-mail: billigm@ariel.ac.il
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ariel University; Eastern R&D Regional Center, Ariel, Israel.

Citation information
Cite this article as: Incorporating volunteer youth in emergency teams: The effect of the cognitive-emotional spiral, Miriam Billig, *Cogent Psychology* (2019), 6: 1704610.

References

Adachi, P., & Willoughby, T. (2014). It's not how much you play, but how much you enjoy the game: The longitudinal associations between adolescents' self-esteem and the frequency versus enjoyment of involvement in sports. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *43* (1), 137–145. doi:10.1007/s10964-013-9988-3.

Akiva, T., Cortina, K. S., & Smith, C. (2014). Involving youth in program decision-making: How common and what might it do for youth? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *43*, 1844–1860. doi:10.1007/s10964-014-0183-y

Bartlett, S. (2008). The implications of climate change for children in lower-income countries. *Children, Youth and Environments*, *18*(1), 71–98.

Billig, M., & Lebovitz, A. (2014). Empowering peripheral communities by using place-identity: Israeli student villages as a platform for a servant creative class. *Community Development*, *45*(4), 368–386. doi:10.1080/15575330.2014.930058

Blanchet-Cohen, N., Manolson, S., & Shaw, K. (2014). Youth-led decision making in community development grants. *Youth and Society*, *46*(6), 819–834. doi:10.1177/0044118X12455024

Bohnert, A., Fredricks, J., & Randall, E. (2010). Capturing unique dimensions of youth organized activity involvement: Theoretical and methodological considerations. *Review of Educational Research*, *80* (4), 576–610. doi:10.3102/0034654310364533

Chiessi, M., Cicognani, E., & Sonn, C. (2010). Assessing sense of community in adolescents: Validating the brief version of the brief scale of sense of community in adolescents (SoC-A). *Journal of Community Psychology*, *38*, 276–292. doi:10.1002/jcop.20364

Cicognani, E., Klimstra, T., & Goossens, L. (2014). Sense of community, identity statuses, and loneliness in adolescence: A cross-national study on Italian and Belgian youth. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *42*, 414–432. doi:10.1002/jcop.2014.42.issue-4

Cicognani, E., Mazzoni, D., Albanesi, C., & Zani, B. (2015). Sense of community and empowerment among young people: Understanding pathways from civic participation to social well-being. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *26*(1), 24–44. doi:10.1007/s11266-014-9481-y

Conner, J. (2011). Youth organizers as young adults: Their commitments and contributions. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *21*, 923–942. doi:10.1111/jora.2011.21.issue-4

Crocetti, E., Erentaitė, R., & Žukauskienė, R. (2014). Identity styles, positive youth development, and civic engagement in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *43*(11), 1818–1828. doi:10.1007/s10964-014-0100-4

Delgado, M., & Staples, L. (2008). *Youth-led community organizing: Theory and action*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Eisman, A. B., Stoddard, S. A., Bauermeister, J. A., Caldwell, C. H., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2016). Trajectories of organized activity participation among urban adolescents: An analysis of predisposing factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *4*, 225–238. doi:10.1007/s10964-015-0267-3

Erikson, E. H. (1982). *The life cycle completed: A review*. New York: Norton.

Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], (2014). Community emergency response teams (CERT). Retrieved from http://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams

FEMA & American Red Cross (2014). National strategy for youth preparedness education. Retrieved from http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1416843767285-165d03f3b14a009466a4bbcd35112152/NationalStrategy_Final_508.pdf

Fernandez, G., & Shaw, R. (2013). Youth council participation in disaster risk reduction in Infanta and Makati, Philippines: A policy review. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, *4*(3), 126–136. doi:10.1007/s13753-013-0014-x

Friedman, S., & Billig, M. (2018). Education, socialization and community: Coping with marginal youth in rural frontier communities in Israel. *Children and Youth Services Review.*, *84*, 103–109. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.10.026

Frisch, M. B., & Gerrard, M. (1981). Natural helping systems: A survey of Red Cross volunteers. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *9*(5), 567–579. doi:10.1007/BF00896477

Ginwright, S. (2010). *Building a Pipeline for Justice: Understanding Youth Organizing and the Leadership Pipeline*. Brooklyn, NY: Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

Grube, J. A., & Piliavin, J. A. (2000). Role identity, organizational experiences, and volunteer performance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *26*(9), 1108–1119. doi:10.1177/01461672002611007

Head, B. W. (2011). Why not ask them? Mapping and promoting youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(4), 541–547. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.05.015

Khan, M. S. A. (2013). Disaster preparedness for sustainable development in Bangladesh. *Disaster Prevention and Management: an International Journal*, *17*(5), 662–671. doi:10.1108/09653560810918667

Kim, J. (2016). Effects of volunteer activities on a sense of community through mediation of self-esteem and career identity in adolescents 1. *International Information Institute (Tokyo). Information*, *19*(12), 5775–5780.

Kim, J. H. (2016a). The effects of adolescent volunteer activities on the perception of local society and community spirit mediated by self-conception. *Science and Engineering Research Support Society*, *131*, 19–23.

Krauss, S. E., Collura, J., & Zeldin, S. (2014). Youth-adult partnership: Exploring contributions to empowerment, agency and community connections in Malaysian youth programs. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *43*(9), 1550–1562. doi:10.1007/s10964-013-0027-1

Larsen, D. J., & Larsen, J. E. (2004). "I am a puzzle": Adolescence as reflected in self-metaphors. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, *38*(4), 246–259.

Lee, S. E. (2009). A longitudinal analysis of participation in volunteer activities and adolescent self-esteem. *Korean Journal of Social Welfare Studies*, *40*(2), 313–335. doi:10.16999/kasws.2009.40.2.313

Lerner, R., Lerner, J., & Benson, J. (2011). Positive youth development: Research and applications for promoting thriving in adolescence. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, *41*, 1–17.

Marta, E., & Pozzi, M. (2008). Young people and volunteerism: A model of sustained volunteerism during the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Adult Development*, *15*(1), 35. doi:10.1007/s10804-007-9033-4

Matsuoka, Y., & Shaw, R. (2012). Hyogo framework for action as an assessment tool of risk reduction: Philippines national progress and Makati city. *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy*, *3*(4), 18–39. doi:10.1002/rhc3.v3.4

McGill, S. (2014). McGill student emergency response team. Retrieved from http://www.msert.ca/

Mueller, M., Lewin-Bizan, S., & Urban, J. (2011). Youth activity involvement and positive youth development. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, *41*, 231–249.

Newport, J. K., & Jeyanth, G. G. P. (2003). Community participation and public awareness in disaster mitigation. *Disaster Prevention and Management: an International Journal*, *12*(1), 33–36. doi:10.1108/09653560310463838

Nicholas, C., Eastman-Mueller, H., & Barbich, N. (2019). Empowering change agents: Youth organizing groups as sites for sociopolitical development. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *63*, 46–60. doi:10.1002/ajcp.2019.63.issue-1pt2

Park, J. S. (2010). The relationship among school adolescents' training activity, voluntary service, self-esteem and sense of community. *Korean Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*(4), 157–182.

Powell, P., Black, L., & Smith, M. (2012). *Training youth to prepare communities for disasters*. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet 12-09. Reno, NV: University of Nevada. Retrieved from http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cy/2012/fs1209.pdf

Ramey, H. L., & Rose-Krasnor, L. (2015). The new mentality: Youth-adult partnerships in community mental health promotion. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *50*, 28–37. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.01.006

Rochester, C., Paine, A. E., Howlett, S., & Zimmeck, M. (2016). *Volunteering and society in the 21st century*. London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Ronan, K. R., & Johnston, D. M. (2005). *Promoting community resilience in disasters – The role for school, youth and families*. New York, NY: Springer.

Schafer, W. A., Carroll, J. M., Haynes, S. R., & Abrams, S. (2008). Emergency management planning as collaborative community work. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, *5*(1), 1–17. doi:10.2202/1547-7355.1396

Schwartz, S., & Suyemoto, K. (2013). Creating change from the inside: Youth development within a youth community organizing program. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *41*, 341–358. doi:10.1002/jcop.2013.41.issue-3

Shah, S. (2011). *Building transformative youth leadership: Data on the impacts of youth organizing*. Brooklyn, NY: Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

Sherrod, L., Torney-Purta, J., & Flanagan, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Shye, S. (2014). Volunteering, theory-based account. In A. C. Michalos (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research* (pp. 6977–6985). Dordrecht: Springer.

Smith, J. A. (ed.). (2003). *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. London: Sage.

Smith, R. (2012). Set charge about change: The effects of a long-term youth civic engagement program. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, *5*(2), 48–60.

Spencer, R., Gowdy, G., Drew, A. L., & Rhodes, J. E. (2019). "Who knows me the best and can encourage me the most?": Matching and early relationship development in youth-initiated mentoring relationships with system-involved youth. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *34*(1), 3–29. doi:10.1177/0743558418755686

Talò, C., Mannarini, T., & Rochira, A. (2014). Sense of community and community participation: A meta-analytic review. *Social Indicators Research*, *117*, 1–28. doi:10.1007/s11205-013-0347-2

Thomas, T., & Florencia, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Youth engaging with the world: Media, communication and social change*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

Turnbull, M., Sterrett, C. L., & Hilleboe, A. (2013). *Toward resilience: A Guide to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation*. Practical Action Publishing. doi:10.3362/9781780440026

Van Til, J. (1988). *Mapping the third sector: Voluntarism in a changing social economy*. New York, NY: The Foundation Center.

Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *26*, 215–240. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.215

Wisner, B. (2006). *Let our children teach us! A review of the role of education and knowledge in disaster risk reduction*. Bangalore: Books for Change.

Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1997). *Community service and social responsibility in youth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

cogent oa

© 2019 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

You are free to:
Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.
Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.
The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:
Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
No additional restrictions

You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

Cogent Psychology **(ISSN: 2331-1908) is published by Cogent OA, part of Taylor & Francis Group.**

Publishing with Cogent OA ensures:

- Immediate, universal access to your article on publication
- High visibility and discoverability via the Cogent OA website as well as Taylor & Francis Online
- Download and citation statistics for your article
- Rapid online publication
- Input from, and dialog with, expert editors and editorial boards
- Retention of full copyright of your article
- Guaranteed legacy preservation of your article
- Discounts and waivers for authors in developing regions

Submit your manuscript to a Cogent OA journal at www.CogentOA.com