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Reframing Social Responsibility Within a Technology-Based Youth Activist Program

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the transformation process in a youth group's conception of itself and its role in assuming responsibility for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use in the community. Building on a technology-based community program, an adult facilitator invited adolescents to collaborate on a youth-produced film that would encourage peers to adopt an ethic of social responsibility for one another. In this article, a framing metaphor is used to discuss the unique potential of film for enabling youth to redefine social issues (in this case, health and responsibility), the importance of an adult facilitator's role in providing alternative frames to the status quo, and the essential role that reframing plays in social change.

Keywords: *social responsibility; youth; activism; technology; civic engagement*

Social responsibility is the sense of obligation that an individual or group feels to fellow human beings or to society. More than altruism, social responsibility is motivated by an identification of oneself with others and the common good and the mutual benefits derived from a particular course of action (Gallay, 2006). The growing field of youth activism is replete with examples of youth acting on an ethic of social responsibility. Activist projects range from youth engaging in public policy formation to asserting civil rights of groups and drawing attention to issues of injustice or unequal access (Sherrod, Flanagan, Kassimir, & Syvertsen, 2005). However, the target of most of the activist projects has been external—in the community or school—rather than within the peer networks of young people themselves.

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In contrast, the theme of social responsibility as framed in this project is illustrated by the axiom "Friends don't let friends . . ." It refers to the mutual responsibility friends might feel toward each other when engaged in potentially risky behaviors or circumstances. Specifically, the project targets young people's motivations and actions concerning intervening in a socially responsible way in friends' substance use. We focus on young people's social relationships and apply theories of social analysis and reframing common to activist projects. We argue that challenging the prevailing view of health as a private concern (an individual's business) and reframing it as a shared, social responsibility (our collective business) are essential underpinnings of enabling youth to intervene in the risk behaviors of friends.

In this article, we discuss a youth activist project that explored the process whereby concepts of health were reframed from a private to a public conceptualization. The goal of the summer project was for the young people, in collaboration with two adults, to learn skills in filming and to develop a video that would communicate the theme of social responsibility, that is, youth intervening in the risk behaviors of their friends.

Review of the Literature

Social Responsibility

There is little extant research on social responsibility within close peer relationships. In fact, the influence of peers, especially in prevention programs, is typically cast in a negative light, that is, "peer pressure to use substances." Recent work shows that adolescents of all ages are more inclined to say that they would intervene in rather than ignore a friend's use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) but that inclination declines with age as youth increasingly believe their friends' choices are "none of my business" (Flanagan, Galloway, & Elek, 2005). Furthermore, even when youth are motivated to act in their friends' use of alcohol or tobacco, their reports of actual intervention are much lower, in part because they (especially young adolescents) may have few opportunities to intervene (Galloway & Flanagan, 2002a, 2002b). The question then becomes, if youth have the intention to act, what might impede or prevent them from actively intervening in peers' risky or harmful behavior?

One answer is their beliefs about the "right" to experiment with alcohol and tobacco and the conceptualization of health risks as a private matter, that is, the right of individuals to do what they choose with their bodies. Many young people believe that the decision to experiment with ATOD, even to the point of personal harm, is an individual's own choice (Berkowitz, Guerra, & Nucci, 1991; Nucci, Guerra, & Lee, 1991). For American youth, such attitudes have strong underpinnings in shared cultural norms about individual autonomy, self-determination, and privacy. Not only are adolescents as an age group highly committed to the rights of individuals (Ruck,

Abramovitch, & Keating, 1998), but the society as a whole strongly endorses such beliefs.

The effect of the private approach toward health can be seen in the ways that young people conceive of risky behavior, especially related to ATOD use. According to several studies and reports, the right to drink, even for binge drinkers and designated drivers, and the right to engage in illegal behavior as long as one does not get caught are typical ways that young people discuss ATOD use (Botvin et al., 1992; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1998, p. A46; Heyman, 1998).

Reframing such normative beliefs is an essential first step in enabling young people to intervene in their friends' behaviors. Indeed, the practice of reframing issues or social analysis is necessary for behavioral as well as social change (Watts & Flanagan, in press). The goal of the current study was to reframe youths' concepts about health from a private to a public or shared responsibility by using film as a medium.

Media Literacy Programs

According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (2003),

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms. In essence, a media literate person can think critically about what they see, hear and read in books, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, movies, music, advertising, video games, the Internet, and new emerging technology.

Media literacy programs, a relatively new type of youth activism program, provide unique opportunities for youth to develop practical skills, be exposed to a variety of perspectives, develop critical consciousness, reframe the status quo as well as their own identities, and present alternative messages to the public. Media literacy programs also offer opportunities to recreate messages through the use of public media, such as radio or video. They provide participants with tangible results of their efforts.

Because of the amount of time youth spend using media (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005) and the ability of the media to construct messages, media literacy programs are an important resource for challenging the status quo. As Gilliam and Bales (2001) note, "How issues are framed—both in the public mind and the mass media—has a measurable impact on public discourse" (p. 3).

Goodman (2003) has argued that the activities and tools provided through media literacy programs offer unique ways to reframe issues and provide alternative views to the public. The very use of a camera and the act of editing educates participants in how framing occurs, such as through the choice of certain camera angles as opposed to others and the editing of pictures in a particular sequence to tell a desired story. The very act of filming places the subject within a frame, isolating and separating the

subject from the viewer. In addition, by engaging in different roles, such as interviewee versus interviewer, youth can see issues from different viewpoints. Youth also need to consider how their messages will be accepted by a target audience, forcing them to examine how messages are constructed and how different groups might interpret them. As youth become familiar with the tools and techniques used to frame messages, they gain power and perspective that enables them to deconstruct and challenge dominant themes and reconstruct more authentic messages (Goodman, 2003). As youth engage in creating media, they not only reframe issues consistent with their views of the world but they also learn to frame messages for others, that is, to engage in strategic communication. In this sense, they are engaging in political action, convincing others that—to borrow from the mantra of the World Social Forum—“another world is possible” (<http://www.forumsocialmundial.org>).

Despite the strong and enthusiastic emergence of media literacy programs, little research has been done to examine video as a tool for self-evaluation and reflection. Goodman (2003) briefly mentions that the youth in his program were much more willing to critically assess and improve their techniques and behavior when reviewing footage. Similarly, in one vocational education setting, trainers used video to evaluate themselves as they interacted with clients. In the process of reviewing the film footage, they became more aware of their own attitudes and actions. Ultimately, video helped the teachers to explore and transform their beliefs, actions, and identities (Hutchinson & Bryson, 1997). Considering the results from this study and Goodman's own observation, it seems likely that video also can be used by youth to examine and reframe their actions, beliefs, and identities.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (2004) is one example of how the media has begun to present the idea of social responsibility among peers. The campaign “Courage—The Anti-Drug” encourages adolescents to pay attention to what their friends are doing and to overcome embarrassment, be courageous, and act responsibly in the best interests of their friends. However, although these campaigns encourage an ethic of socially responsible intervention with friends, they do not provide youth with a repertoire of practical solutions about how to intervene.

Prevention programs have moved in the direction of encouraging young people to examine their normative beliefs about drug and alcohol use. Mindful that young people typically want to fit in, a now common prevention strategy is to inform youth that the choice not to use ATOD is one that a large number of their peers make (Perkins, 2003). Thus, the very field of prevention uses reframing as a mechanism for changing beliefs and behavior. The goal of the current project was to reframe the very issues of health, risk, and well-being from the current private responsibility discourse to a more public discourse. Making socially responsible behavior a social norm in the minds of young people could contribute significantly to prevention work (Flanagan, Gill, & Gallay, 2005).

Youth Development and Youth Activism

Elsewhere we have argued that youth activism is a logical next step in the field of community youth development if the concepts of positive youth development (PYD) are taken seriously (Flanagan, Wray, & Syvertsen, 2007; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). By that we mean that if young people are considered community assets whose voices, contributions, and criticisms are taken seriously, then social change is inevitable. As generational theorists have argued, social change happens with the fresh contact that a new generation coming of age has with its society and the way that the new generation frames the issues and takes action (Mannheim, 1928/1952).

Larson and Hansen (2005) distinguish PYD programs from youth activist programs by pointing out that whereas the former offer opportunities to develop skills, in the latter, youth use those skills to change systems. The only point missing from this distinction is the fact that activism itself implies some kind of social analysis and critique. Before youth apply themselves to changing systems, they have to (a) believe that there is something amiss or wrong with the way things are, (b) have some alternative views of the way things could be, and (c) have a sense of what they (the youth) could do to achieve those goals.

To engage in social change, a level of critical consciousness needs to be reached in which youth begin to "think critically about accepted ways of thinking and feeling, discerning the hidden interests in underlying assumptions and framing notions" (Watts & Flanagan, in press). According to George Lakoff (2004), frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. Reframing the way we see the world is essential to activism because it is the foundation for social change. In fact, Lakoff sees no distinction. In his view, reframing is social change.

Activism is a process that begins with the step of reframing. Youth activist programs expose youth to how social systems work, how social norms are created, and encourage young people to critically assess those norms. Through this exposure, young people learn firsthand that social norms are a kind of script. Once youth see that norms are socially constructed, they also can appreciate that those norms can be challenged and changed. In sum, youth activist programs challenge the norms and the scripts that are taken for granted.

The Role of the Adult Facilitator

Both youth development and activist programs provide opportunities for young people to find their voice. But that may not be enough for a critical awareness to develop. Steven Goodman (2003) writes, "the idea here is to help the students move beyond themselves and the strictly self-referential to explore other realities; to go outside their own literal, lived experiences to the metaphorical and conceptual realm, and then back again" (p. 58). Young people need the opportunity to examine their own belief systems, compare them with the beliefs of others, discuss the differences, and decide anew where they stand.

Adult facilitators play a valuable role in presenting alternative perspectives to social norms. The facilitators' maturity, previous experiences, and perspectives are all important resources. In addition, adult facilitators can assist youth in imagining a target audience and framing their message in a strategic way so as to communicate with a particular group (Larson & Hansen, 2005).

The Present Study

The Social Responsibility summer project grew out of a larger program of work on the development and manifestation of social responsibility in adolescence and the factors associated with teens' inclinations to intervene in friends' risk behaviors (Flanagan et al., 2005a). Hereafter, we refer to the larger project as the SOCRESP study and to the summer project that is the focus of this article as the SR summer project. From the SOCRESP study we learned the following: that views of health as a private issue of individual choice increase with age; that forms of intervention change, with confiding in adults declining with age; that intervening with friends is positively related to family values that encourage compassion and to feelings of belonging and group solidarity at school; and that intervening also is positively related to youths' beliefs that the behavior poses harm.

The SR summer project was an initial attempt to translate the basic findings of the SOCRESP study into a practical intervention tool. The goal of this 6-week summer project was for the youth to collectively create a video component that would help reframe issues of social responsibility for a neighboring community-wide curriculum. The intention of the video project was to provide practical input: concrete suggestions from youth on how young people could intervene in their friends' potentially harmful behaviors.

Site Description

The SR summer project took place under the umbrella of a larger Community-Based Youth Development (CBYD) program that we refer to in this article as the Teenagers Learning Technology (TLT) program. The goal of the TLT program is to use technology (e.g., robotics, Global Positioning Systems/Geographic Information Systems [GPS/GIS], Web page development, nanofabrication) as a means of engaging young people in learning and contributing to their communities. The theoretical framework of the technology-based program is community youth development. Therefore, the program's major elements include skill development and learning, relationship building, and opportunities to contribute.

The TLT's primary audience is high school youth. The program specifically recruited freshman and sophomore youth to participate. These students were referred to the program by guidance counselors, nurses, teachers, principals, and support

staff. A referral form was used to help school staff recognize students who might benefit most from participation. The referral form contained a list of criteria to help identify marginalized students. This criterion included characteristics such as students who are not engaged in more than one school or community activity, those who are from a troubled home, those who are financially disadvantaged, and/or those who lack access to technology.

For the SR summer project, we chose to work with one particular TLT site because they were enthusiastic about incorporating a summer video component on the theme of social responsibility and peer intervention into their curriculum. The CBYD site chosen for the summer project has a higher level of poverty when compared to the average for the state. The county school district has approximately 2,300 students. Sixty-two percent of the district's students qualify for free/reduced lunch, and the percentage of students from low-income families is 55%, compared to the state average of 11%.

The SR summer project had a distinct agenda that built on the TLT program's theme of media skills and community contribution. The agenda was to reframe beliefs about health from a private to a public orientation, to learn how to produce a film, and to communicate via that medium why and how one should assume responsibility for friends' health risk behaviors.

Project Activities

The SR summer project occurred throughout a 6-week period. The site coordinator and the first author met with the students twice a week for 4 hours a day. In the final week, an optional third day was added to ensure that the video product was completed. Of the 12 youth who participated in the summer SR program, 11 were Caucasian and 1 was Hispanic; 3 were female and 9 were male. The age range of the summer participants was 13 to 18 years, with the average age being 15.

The first author was a participant observer, organizing and facilitating the summer film project while collecting data. Each day, the project followed the same basic structure. We would meet in the program facility and review the previous session's work. Each session was recorded via video for later review and data collection, which meant that we would engage in a group process of reflecting and analyzing the previous session's progress and activities. Then, together, we would review the steps we had completed toward the final product and that we still had to do. After working for about 2 hours, we would stop whatever activity we were engaged in and break for lunch. Depending on the days' activities, we would either continue to work after lunch or break for the day. If we chose to break after lunch, we would usually spend a short amount of time reflecting on the day's activities.

The specific skill-building activities included writing scripts, drawing storyboards, filming scenes, reviewing and analyzing footage, interviewing community members, and editing footage. To engage in these activities, the youth had to learn

various equipment and media techniques, such as creating proper shots, operating a camera, utilizing a microphone, and using editing software. Each activity was performed as a group, with special care taken to ensure each individual was offered the opportunity to learn and practice the various exercises.

Before detailing the data collection and results, we note some of the program elements at the outset. First, it should be noted that the youth successfully produced an 8-min video composed of skits and interviews. Although the overall goal of the SR summer project was made clear at the outset—to create a video that would communicate the importance of intervening and help peers intervene in the risky behaviors of friends—the youth who produced the video were given a wide berth with respect to how they might communicate this message. This was a conscious decision to focus less on a perfect product and more on the group dynamics and process whereby young people created the product.

The final video begins as a party scene with an inebriated peer who eventually passes out. No one intervenes. This scene fades into two young people discussing how they would have felt if they were the person who had passed out as well as how difficult it can be to speak up in such contexts. The next skit takes place on a boat dock where three inebriated boys are wrestling. One falls into the water and no one intervenes. Once again, this vignette fades into a discussion where youth empathize with the drowning victim, discuss the consequences of not intervening, and talk about whether it is their responsibility to do so. Finally, the youth chose to include a number of the interviews they performed with community members. The youth were especially interested in interviews they had performed with Narcotics Anonymous (NA) members, which discuss practical strategies on how to intervene. The video concludes with a brief narrative from one of the youth.

Data Collection

Four methods of data collection were used. The first was informal interviews and discussions with the youth participants. These were conducted at the beginning and end of each session. Data from these interviews were complemented with (a) field notes documenting informal conversations and observations of the group dynamics during the 6 weeks of the program (these field notes were based both on immediate observations and on reviews of video footage), (b) two focus groups with a subset of the participants, and (c) an open-ended questionnaire distributed at the end of the program.

The following questions were used as guides for data collection and analyses:

What practical advice were the youth able to offer to their peers in how to intervene in friends' risky behavior?

Did youths' conceptions of social responsibility change and, if so, how?

How did the use of media assist in reframing the issue of social responsibility?
How did the use of adult/youth relationships assist in reframing the issue of social responsibility?

Data Analysis

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), three phases were used to analyze the data: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction refers to the initial task of selecting and simplifying data collected through qualitative methods. This means that certain themes are chosen while others are put aside. These decisions were guided by the research questions outlined above.

Using a Post-it note system, which included data from field notes, video observation, and focus group and unstructured interview responses, the data were reduced into three general themes: social responsibility, media tools and activities, and adult-youth interactions. All of the data collected from the four qualitative methods outlined above were assigned to one of the three themes. Once the data were organized thematically, they were then categorized into specific areas to search for relationships that would address the four research questions.

Two categories were created under social responsibility. The first category addressed attitudes toward peer intervention (whether intervening in friends' risk behaviors was perceived as something one should do, whether it was considered a private [none of my business] or a public [social responsibility] matter, whether the problem was "theirs" or "ours," and/or at what point one should intervene in a friend's behaviors). The second category addressed intervention strategies (the repertoire of concrete behaviors for ways to intervene in friends' ATOD use). By documenting these two aspects of social responsibility throughout the course of the summer project, it was possible to assess change in views of SR as well as the role of media and adult facilitators in those changes.

The various media literacy activities were examined to see how each activity might have offered a unique opportunity for learning or reframing. For example, the youth engaged in a process of self-reflection and evaluation at the beginning of each session as they reviewed the previous session's recorded activities. Their comments regarding their own behavior and resulting changes in behavior as a result of this process were noted. Observations based on this and other media activities were later evaluated to formulate conclusions regarding how media activities might have contributed to the process of reframing throughout the program.

It also was important to explore the dynamics that may have occurred within the adult/youth interactions. Initially, we intended to focus largely on the impact of the interactions between the adult program facilitators and youth participants. However, as data emerged throughout the study, we expanded our findings to include not only the impact of the role of the adult facilitators but also of the adult community

members. For example, one of the activities the youth participated in was interviewing adult individuals on the street regarding ATOD and peer intervention. The impact of these interviews with adult community members was underestimated at the beginning of the project. The significance of this activity became apparent after we reviewed the initial observations and participant feedback. This practice of remaining open to emerging theories and meaning, in addition to original study questions, is one that is encouraged within the field of qualitative research (Frechtling & Westat, 1997).

Findings

Although the youth were able to complete the final video in the 6-week program, the duration of the program may have been too short to accomplish a complete reframing of ATOD as a socially responsible alternative to “it’s none of my business.” However, there were some strong indicators that the 6-week program played a role in both challenging and potentially reframing the participants’ view of social responsibility and their ability to identify practical strategies of intervention. The main developments during the course of this project were as follows:

1. The youth reframed their understanding of drug and alcohol use as a community issue, not just an individual problem (our problem, not just theirs).
2. The youth developed a sense of ownership toward the issue of peer intervention, which in turn motivated them to take the topic more seriously.
3. The youth developed a greater appreciation that practical strategies for intervening in peers’ ATOD use were needed.
4. The youth reframed their personal identities as community actors who could assume responsibility for a community issue.

Drug and Alcohol Use: A Community Issue

In the middle of the program, the youth participants spent 2 days interviewing and filming random community members on the street. For the first day of interviews the youth chose random people on the street to approach. Most individuals were willing to respond to the participants’ questions. On the second day of interviewing, the program coordinator (the other adult in the summer project) asked the local NA group if they would agree to be interviewed. The community liaison for the NA group suggested that the youth wait until the end of a meeting and approach the members of the group at that time. The liaison would inform the members ahead of time that the youth would like to interview them and that if the members were willing the youth would be available outside.

The NA chapter members were extremely open with the youth and shared their personal perspectives on ATOD use and experiences of addiction, including the fact

that many of them now also had children in rehab. The NA members also provided a number of practical intervention strategies, such as what to say to a friend and how to say it, when to encourage a friend to consider rehab, and when it might be time to break up the friendship if the friend refused to listen. These adults repeatedly mentioned the importance of speaking up. Regardless of the friend's reaction, they noted that doing something was the mark of a true, loyal friend.

These interviews with the NA members provided an opportunity for the young people to interact with people with whom they had never had contact. The youths' reaction was similar to that noted in some studies of community service. Specifically, opportunities for young people to interact with individuals who are members of stereotyped groups (in this case, drug addicts) can break down group stereotypes (Flanagan et al., 2005b). In the interviews with the recovering addicts, they came to understand that these were people similar to their neighbors who had families and who cared about the health and well-being of others.

Breaking down these stereotypes played a significant role in the appreciation of ATOD addiction as something that could happen to people similar to themselves, not just "those people." When asked later in the discussion if they (the youth participants) thought the target audience (the youth in the neighboring community who ultimately would view their video) would be affected by their video, one member of the team responded,

I hope they would listen to our message . . . that they can see examples of how they could end up . . . becoming an addict . . . if they ever think of doing it, or if they do do it. . . . Because they could end up like any of the people we interviewed.

The youth began to understand that they were susceptible to the same addictions and consequences as those they interviewed, enabling them to personalize the dangers of ATOD use.

Once having related to the NA members on a more personal level, the youth then began to grow in their understanding of ATOD use as "our" community's issue. In one focus group at the beginning of the project, the youth were asked if drug and alcohol use were issues in their community. A female participant stated that they were not, at least not where she lived. She said that only people in certain neighborhoods engaged in that type of behavior. The others agreed with her statement. Later, however, after the interviews with the NA members, the same participant stated,

This is "our town" and a lot of people are involved with [drug and alcohol use]. Either you know someone, or you do it yourself. Basically, anyone in our town has someone in their family who is an addict or recovering.

This was one example of how youth took ownership of the ATOD issue. In their minds, ATOD use was reframed from something that was someone else's problem—in

another neighborhood—to “our” problem in “our” community. This shift in thinking is an essential prerequisite to action because once it is “our” problem, “we” have to confront it together.

Other evidence that their concepts of ATOD use changed came from the responses to the open-ended questions that they completed at the end of the project. To the item, “How do you feel this project has affected your view of your community?” three responses from different youth suggested a greater awareness of the number of people whose lives had been affected by ATOD use:

“It has shown me that lots of people have problems.”

“ . . . how many people who do drugs in our community.”

“ . . . realized that there are a lot more drug [addicts] than we thought.”

Three other youth mentioned a new awareness of community efforts and concerns about ATOD use. Their responses included the following:

“There are groups trying to help people change their lives who have made poor choices.”

“The community actually does care about the drug situation and wants to stop it from spreading to others.”

“They care more than we thought.”

The increased awareness of human service providers and community assistance organizations also has been noted in research on community service. Flanagan et al. (2005b) note that community service projects often engage youth with people working in the fields of human services who typically are motivated to help others and improve the community. Thus, one of the things that youth say they learned from their service experience was that there are a lot of people in the community who care and want to help others.

Ownership of ATOD as a Public Issue

As an individual begins to have personal connections to an issue, she or he is more likely to “own” the problem and become proactive in finding solutions for the problem. The participants in the project began to own the issue of ATOD use when they believed that it could affect people “like them,” not just distant abstract others. Research suggests that as youth begin to take personal responsibility for the risky behaviors of friends, they also are more inclined to intervene to do something about those behaviors (Gallay & Flanagan, 2002a, 2002b).

However, at the beginning of this summer project, the only way that young people could imagine intervening was when the risks to a friend were palpable, that is, when the friend’s behavior had reached an obviously dangerous level. For example, in the third session, one youth participant was asked during an informal discussion, “Should

you try and stop a friend when he or she is engaging in potentially harmful behavior?" The participant replied, "No, that is their business." When asked during the sixth session if it was their responsibility to help a friend who might be drinking too much, the same youth participant responded, "Only if they are going to hurt themselves."

Other evidence was provided in the scripting of peer intervention scenes for the film. Early in the summer project, the group came up with an underage party script in which alcohol was plentiful and everyone imbibed. When writing the scripts, they did not consider the possibility of even one person refraining from using some sort of substance at the party. Many of them stated that a little drinking is not bad. At no time was there a discussion of the law or having one or more individuals act as responsible parties who could guard against potentially harmful consequences. Also, in scripting the action, the young people did not consider intervening before the negative consequences of the behavior became quite serious. The possibility of death was frequently used as the sole indication that intervention was called for. In the course of writing the script, the adult facilitator asked if there might be more common outcomes than death to drug and alcohol use. The young female leading the discussion replied, quite simply, "No," and continued to brainstorm with the rest of the group.

Filming the scenes provided another venue in which the participants' attitudes toward peer intervention were observed. For the film that they created, the youth engaged in a party-like scene in which each held a cup implying the use of some sort of alcohol. They laughed and pushed each other during the scene, and some pretended to pass out and/or stumble through the frame. While filming, the youth often improvised their lines with references to those characters who were severely intoxicated, including, "I can't believe he did that"; "Did you see how stupid he [she] looked?" and "Get away from me." Although these were lines within a scene, they were also indicative of what the youth viewed as normative behavior within such a setting, that is, their party scripts. Despite the fact that the youth were able to choose their roles and that we had instructed them to use this scene as a means to provide intervention strategies to other youth, none of the participants took the initiative to intervene or act responsibly for the others' behavior or safety. One cannot say for certain why the young people chose the roles they enacted, but it seems safe to assume that if intervention was a common script in their behavioral repertoire, someone would have intervened at some point in the filming. Instead, the youth chose to either act out roles of overly intoxicated characters or to ridicule the behavior of the intoxicated characters. At no time did they choose a role that would offer support or show concern for another's behavior.

However, during the course of the summer project, the young people began to rethink experimenting with alcohol or drugs and began to think about intervening before a friend's use posed serious personal harm. Again, the interviews with the NA members seemed to have a significant impact on reframing the importance of

intervening in a timely manner in a friend's risky behavior. Although the NA members were alive, not having suffered the severe consequence of death, they shared personal stories about how drug and alcohol use had affected their own and their families' lives.

Although at the beginning of the project the youth stated that they would do nothing if their friend were experimenting with risky ATOD use, by the end of the study they expressed a desire to "speak up" because that's what a loyal friend should do. This concept of loyalty was first raised during an interview with one of the adult NA members. One youth interviewer asked the adult what she would tell her teenage child if he or she had a friend engaged in ATOD use. The adult strongly emphasized that protecting the friend from harm through some form of intervention was a more loyal approach to friendship than to remain silent to protect the peace within the relationship.

Through the interviews with NA members, the youth came to appreciate the very negative consequences of ATOD abuse to individuals and to their families. In addition, the youth began to conceptualize intervening with peers within a framework of friendship and loyalty rather than one of privacy and personal choice.

The open-ended responses, collected at the end of the project, provided another source of evidence that beliefs about ATOD use had changed during the course of the project. For example, in the open-ended questions, three youth discussed how speaking up when friends are engaged in risky behavior is a sign of true friendship and that they were now more likely to do so. These ideas differed from those in the focus group at the beginning of the project when the group as a whole agreed that a friend's decision to engage in harmful behavior was that individual's own choice.

Formulating Practical Strategies

As noted earlier, the goal of the summer project was to produce a film of intervention strategies in the ATOD use of friends. Thus, in developing a script for the film, the young people themselves had to reflect on what they would say to other youth about handling peers' ATOD use. However, despite the adult facilitators' numerous attempts to encourage the youth to come up with practical intervention strategies in their script, they had a hard time doing so. Repeatedly, when asked directly by the adult facilitator for a concrete suggestion of what they would do, they answered, "I don't know." Inevitably, discussion would quickly turn to the individual's choice to engage in harmful behavior. The only exception was one young person's recommendation about taking car keys away from a friend who was drinking, suggesting that this script, which has been broadcast time and again in media messages, is part of young people's repertoire of acceptable ways to intervene.

Throughout the course of the project, the youth began to seek more practical strategies in exactly how to intervene. Although the participants did not demonstrate a growth in their own repertoire of intervention strategies, they repeatedly asked

adults what the adults would say to their friends when engaged in harmful behavior. During interviews with the NA members, the youth asked more specific questions, such as, “If you had a child who was starting to do something that might hurt them, how would you help them?” “If you were only 13 and had a friend who was doing something that might hurt them, what would you do?” and “If you were only 13 and had a friend doing something like drugs, would you tell their parents?”

Community Actors

The youth expressed awareness during the project of how their role within the project had changed. They mentioned that in previous projects they had merely participated, whereas in this particular summer project they were asked for input and worked collaboratively toward an end product. This is a distinction often made between traditional youth development programs and youth activist programs. Within a youth activist program, the participants become the actors, reframing social norms and making contributions to their community (Larson & Hansen, 2005; Lerner, 2004). Such active engagement in defining the project from the beginning is likely to sustain engagement through the end of the project. Sustaining engagement in the summer SR project was never a problem. In fact, their very role as filmmakers enabled the young people to reframe their identities as serious community actors.

During an informal discussion with three of the young people following their person-on-the-street interviews, they repeatedly identified their interviews with the NA members as the context in which major learning and transformation had occurred. When asked, “Besides the use of equipment, what were your biggest learning experiences from this project?” one participant replied,

We’re more serious around each other now, we mean, we’re really serious around each other and we’re never serious with each other. We just usually hang out with each other at the club. And . . . drugs. We don’t want to do them. We don’t want to end up someday in AA, getting interviewed by a youth club. . . . I don’t ever want to have to say, “I’m a recovering addict.”

Her response suggests that some of the youth were aware that they had changed during the project. They contrasted how they were now (more serious and mature) with how they used to be and noted that the possible selves they imagined as a result of the NA interviews were formative in this transformation.

The Role of Media

Media was an especially useful tool in promoting self-awareness, self-criticism, and more proactive behaviors. While reviewing the footage from the first scene (in which they had acted out a party scenario), the young people looked self-conscious,

apathetic, and hesitant to become engaged within the scene. When asked what they thought about their performance in the scene, one stated, "We just stood there" and another "We didn't do anything." They expressed these statements with obvious displeasure at their performance. From that point on, each participant was noticeably more involved in the shooting and acting of each scene. Reviewing the footage provided a useful opportunity for the youth to critique their behavior and then choose to become more actively engaged in the project.

Revisiting the footage also provided opportunities for youth to take responsibility for the direction and progress of the project. After the first 3 days of filming, the first author began to notice that a lot of footage of the party scene had no message. Mindful of the impending deadline, she asked the youth where they thought the project was headed and if anything was lacking from the footage. The author was careful to refrain from expressing her own observations of the project's progress. One participant emphatically stated, "We need a point" and another followed up with "Yeah, a message." This assessment enabled the group to spend the next hour discussing exactly what they wanted to say to the target audience and how they could use media tools to communicate that message.

Reviewing the footage was a means for the youth to assess and critique themselves. In fact, as editors of their acting, there was a distance that allowed them to evaluate themselves as actors, objects of editorial analysis. This separation of self from representation is a clear example of the potential for reframing inherent in the filming and editing process. In this instance, the youth examined and challenged their own behavior, reframing their identities and progress in the project.

There also seemed to be an increase in the participants' confidence when performing the professional role of camera operator and interviewer. One male stated, "We could approach anybody." In contrast to the smaller group settings in which some of the youth were hesitant to speak up or voice their opinions, when they assumed a more professional (and competent) role (as interviewer or filmmaker) they became confident and able to assert themselves within a discussion. In the role of interviewer, the youth's position behind the camera lens created a safe distance between them and their subjects, and this emboldened them. While the camera was recording the subject's (i.e., the person on the street) performance, the interviewer (i.e., the young person) could guide and observe the subjects' responses.

Exploring different roles seemed to provide the youth the opportunity to explore different intervention strategies. When the youth were writing and practicing skits, their repertoire of intervention strategies was very limited. Within the skits, they were acting as stereotypical adolescents engaged in irresponsible behavior. They did not write in or suggest intervention strategies and focused solely on the consequences of dangerous behavior. When they took on the role of responsible and engaged citizens interviewing fellow community members, they began to mention different intervention strategies. Within their interview questions, they would ask what actions the interviewee would take if confronted with a friend or child engaged

in risky behavior. The youth participants often would provide the interviewee with suggestions on actions they could take, such as talk to the friends' parents.

The Role of the Adult Facilitator

The adult facilitators also helped to reframe the participants' roles within the project and their approach to the issues discussed. It was very important for the goals of this study that the youth participants took and felt ownership of the project. This was sometimes a difficult task because the project had a predetermined agenda and deadline. To foster ownership, the first author, acting as participant observer, sought the participant's feedback and involvement as much as possible throughout the course of the project.

At the beginning of each session, the youth would collectively evaluate the direction and progress of the project. The first author would facilitate by reminding the participants of their message and the project deadline. At times, the youth would decide within these discussions to alter the direction of the project. For example, although they had a three-skit product after the second session, the group decided in the fourth session that interviewing adult community members on the street would make a more interesting segment for their final video. They decided to replace the third skit with these interviews. The author/facilitator helped the youth explore why they wanted to make this change and what logistical steps would need to be taken to implement the new plan. The author also explained practically to the group the technical skills that would be needed to perform successful interviews. The youth participants took responsibility for creating a new plan for the day, organizing small groups to perform interviews, and delegating specific tasks within those groups. The youth then conducted interviews with various community members and later edited the interviews into a cohesive and powerful segment.

By facilitating discussions such as this one, the author sought to coach, or guide, the youth into taking personal responsibility for the project. The youth needed a certain amount of guidance and instruction due to their unfamiliarity with creating a video production. However, it was important that after receiving instruction the participants were able to debate decisions, delegate responsibilities, and ultimately take ownership of the final product. Fostering a sense of ownership contributes to young people's sense of being in a safe environment, which is necessary for the examination and reframing of normative issues (Goodman, 2003). Within one discussion, a participant expressed how this sense of ownership was new to her and how it helped her feel more serious about the topic of peer intervention,

Researcher: So, you're more serious with this project than you usually are?"

Participant: Well, when we are dealing with this topic, we get serious . . . and as a group, we're giving input on it. It was different before because we've done projects last year where we get credit for doing it and I didn't do anything. I don't want to get credit for doing something I didn't [do].

This study provided valuable insights into practices that might assist youth in reframing the issue of health as a public rather than only a private matter and as a shared/social responsibility. Through the practical use of media and the active role of adult facilitators, the youth were able to reframe their understanding of ATOD abuse as a community problem. As the participants began to understand more fully the social nature of ATOD use within their community, they began to develop a greater ownership toward peer intervention. This ownership led to an increase in their belief that practical strategies are necessary when considering how one might intervene in another's risky behavior. Finally, the youth were able to reframe their own identities as community actors able to play an active role in public issues.

Implications

Previous research has explored why youth are hesitant, despite feeling inclined, to intervene in friends' risk behaviors (Flanagan et al., 2005a; Gallay, 2006). The fact that American youth (and adults for that matter) typically consider health and risk taking private matters, which are only the individual's and nobody else's business, is likely to be implicated in their reticence to intervene. Not only does this norm teach young people that their friends' behavior is "none of their business," but it also influences public discourse, preventing actual intervention tools and strategies from being discussed as common practices. Youth need to be provided with emotionally safe settings through which they can challenge normative beliefs such as privacy and individualism and be presented with alternative belief systems, such as that of social responsibility. Because behaviors become normative through repeated practice (Giddens, 1984), young people also need actual opportunities to practice alternatives to the status quo.

There were a number of factors that may have affected the final outcomes of this project. As previously mentioned, the 6-week duration of this project was too short a time frame to create a significant impact on the participants' practical intervention skills. Also, the site coordinator who assisted with the project maintained a slightly more private view of social responsibility than the researcher, which at times, led to conflicting conversations with the youth. At other times, productive conversation with the youth was difficult due to the noise and distraction of other day camps sharing the meeting facility. Nonetheless, we were able to document change in youths' conception and ownership of the problem of ATOD use and of their role as active agents in addressing it. The active use of media to frame the problem and of adult facilitators in probing youths' thinking was implicated in the changes.

The role of adults as contributors to youths' ability to reframe social issues should not be underestimated. Adults need to consider how their experiences and perspectives could provide valuable alternatives that enable young people to challenge the status quo. Adult facilitators themselves need strategies about how to strike a balance

between encouraging youth to challenge the status quo and, at the same time, giving youth space to find their voice and claim ownership of their work.

Finally, the potential of the camera and the lens as a tool for reflection, evaluation, and reframing is worthy of future examination. As we have noted, it was clear throughout the course of the project that using the camera and reflecting on the footage were means by which the young people reframed the issue as well as their own identities and the basis on which they decided to take different actions.

The results of this study reinforce the value of video documented in other work. As Hutchinson and Bryson (1997) documented, when vocational teachers watched their interactions with clients on video they were able to criticize their attitudes and actions. The researchers state that video eventually helped the teachers explore themselves, their practices, and through repeated recordings and reviews, their own identity and transformation (Hutchinson & Bryson, 1997). Considering the results from this study and Goodman's (2003) observations, the potential of film for enabling change in self-perceptions and perceptions of problems and their solutions is evident.

Finally, engaging in media-related activities creates connections between youth and their communities and encourages civic action. Youth are more likely to engage in civic activities when they believe they are able to affect systems (Larson & Hansen, 2005). When young people engage in media literacy programs, they typically produce films, broadcasts, or printed materials, tangible evidence of their work. Furthermore, because their voices and views are captured in the product, there can be a ripple effect when the product is disseminated. As Goodman (2003) states, "The power of these community youth media projects lies not solely in the community changes they have initiated but also in the civic skills, community connections, and the relationships that the individual youth producers developed through the process" (p. 105). Through the hard evidence of their efforts, the numerous skills acquired, and the community relationships formed, adolescents have multiple venues for creating change within their communities.

Summary

Although most youth activist projects target issues of a more public nature and often focus on social injustice or the abuse of a public good such as the environment, this particular project focused on peers reaching out to one another to create change. Youth have the potential to act as powerful allies in one another's behavior, avoiding harm and encouraging each other toward positive decision making. However, for youth to actively engage in socially responsible behavior, social norms of individualism and privacy need to be challenged. Youth also need to learn strategies for intervening with peers and practice those strategies so they can use them when needed.

Ownership of the problem is a key step in the process of engaging young people in its solution. Film can be a medium that allows them to frame the issue as they see it and reframe their identities vis-à-vis the problem.

Youth activist literature tends to focus on the products of activism, at times at the expense of process. Our experience in the SR project made us mindful that changing attitudes and identities is also part of social change.

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