

Variation on a Space Divided: Marginalized Youth and their Community Centre

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Research Context

- Community Center, Quebec, Canada
 - ...to improve the ability of families to reduce and/or eliminate the risks associated with living in poverty through educational, cultural, social and recreational programs.
- Youth Internship Program

Youth Internship Program (YIP)

- Funded by *Le Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles*
- Up to 15 participants between 15 – 18 years of age
- Opportunities for employment training, help with school (i.e., tutoring), physical education activities, and nutrition education

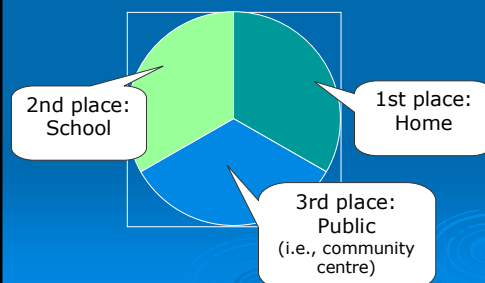
Literature Review

- Leisure (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997)
 - Intrinsically Motivated
 - Perceived Freedom
- Community Centre (Glover, 2004)
 - To mold the ideal citizen through democratic processes
 - A public space where the public can influence community affairs

Literature Review

- Third Space (Oldenburg, 1999)
 - Informal locations where community members gather to alleviate pressures
 - Distinct from other areas of life
 - Inclusive
 - Sense of connectedness

Oldenburg's Spaces (1999)



Purpose

- To examine the impact of the community centre and its program, YIP, on marginalized youth.
- Research Questions:
 - In what ways does the community centre/YIP impact marginalized youth?
 - Does the community centre contribute to gang prevention. If so, how?

Participants

- 4 participants
 - 2 males
 - 2 females
- 17-19 years old
- Living with mom, siblings, nephew
- Changed high school 2 to 3 times

Research Method

- Focus Group
 - 2 hour discussion
 - 1 hour creation of a hip hop song
- Example of Questions asked
 - What is the impact of YIP on your life?
 - In your opinion, how do you think YIP affects gang prevention?

Findings



Relationship with Gangs: “The struggles and doubts”

We had family members that are part of the gang...I seen from a young age what gang relation does to you...

YIP keeps me out of trouble, it keeps my head straight...it basically shows me that my decision of never being in a gang - it's a right decision.

- Deshonna

I take classes with them. I take no part in their gang activities...Just friendship.

- Jerome

They're my friends.....I know, what they do, who they killed.

- Tracy

Relationship:
"She believes I can do it..."

Getting together with the other members. The games, the weird games that we play. And, finally having Jada as a friend. We bonded.
- Marcus

She's [Jada] my best friend. She texts me every single day and she Facebooks me every single day.
- Tracy

Support:
"...So, I stand on my feet"

Tracy: Jada's like the cool mom that we all want...if I call Jada and tell her I didn't go to school today, she gives me hell. And if I drop out of school, she makes sure I'm in another school. A school that I can function in...If we have to go to court... Jada's there.

Marcus: Cool mom, no. Sister maybe...I could share anything with Jada, I just don't. Not yet. Soon!

Motivation: "Trying to overcome"

That's [Jada's enthusiasm and energy] what makes it good. It makes you actually want to come instead of doing whatever else.
- Marcus

Jada will text us and be like, are you coming today? ...if we don't show, then what kind of person does that make us look like?
- Tracy

Opportunity: "So that I can be King,
Run to the top of the hill"

I've had goals but I wasn't really chasing them before...

The thing is, I choose to be a delinquent, but she [Jada] gets mad at me every time.
- Marcus

The internship and having [the community center's] support, my poetic skills improved a little...and [I] became a little better at expressing myself.
- Jerome

Achievement:
"Standing tall, won't fall"

[In this program]...you learn how to achieve your goals. You get to a place where you can achieve your goals.

- Deshonna

I think [the community center's] fun! I think it's better than me being home all day not having anything to do...I make a million and one photocopies, and sometimes I answer the phone.

- Tracy

Learning:
"You have helped me see"

Your workshops helped us a lot...when we had to paste what we like on the board and they asked us all these different questions to see what kind of person we are.

- Deshonna

I showed her [Jada] some of my poetry and she gave me some tips to become better at writing and stuff, and to like improve and stop writers block and stuff.

- Jerome

Future:
"Get respect, From staying in check"

I'd like to help people with their problems...I was always taking care of somebody or helping somebody so I might as well put it into a career

- Deshonna

She [Jada] represents that one person that cares about a lot of people...what happens in their life and...how they pursue their future.

- Tracy

Implications: “Get into my life”

- Gang Prevention = Personal involvement
 - Workshops, internship, and tutoring sessions were peripheral
 - Relationship with adult central
- 3rd place as a 1st (home) and 2nd (place of learning and achievement) place
- Importance of a fun environment to create an all encompassing space

Future Research

- On-going study: Two more focus groups to conduct
- Further investigation into the role of the facilitator/program coordinators and the impact of programs, such as YIP, on their lives.