

Supporting Youth Development Outcomes: An Evaluation of a Responsibility Model-Based Program

David S. Walsh

Abstract

This study compared youth development outcomes of participants in a physical activity-based extended day program to the same outcomes during their school day. The extended day program, called "The Coaching Club," was offered to ten inner city fourth and fifth graders who attend an elementary school in a large metropolitan city. The program was based on Hellison's Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model (TPSR). A form of mixed methodology was used, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study. The quantitative phase involved the administration of a validated four point Likert scale questionnaire, which asked participants to evaluate both their Coaching Club experiences and school experiences in relation to nine outcomes that support youth development. The qualitative phase consisted of follow-up interviews with each participant to further illuminate their perceptions of both experiences. The quantitative results indicated that both kinds of experiences were viewed as supporting youth development. However, Coaching Club participants provided stronger support in five of the outcomes, and school received stronger support in two of the outcomes. There was virtually no significance in two of the outcomes. The qualitative results indicated that overall participants were supportive of both experiences; however they gave many more specific examples for Coaching Club.

The Need for Youth Development Programs

Youth across America, particularly in underserved communities, are faced with an abundance of negative environmental factors that affect cognitive, emotional, and social growth (Garbarino, 1995; Kozol, 1995; Lawson, 1997; Martinek & Hellison, 1997). Large amounts of unsupervised time contribute to this trend toward disaffection and disassociation, often leading to experimentation with drugs, sex, and even violence (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994).

The field of youth development attempts to address these negative behavioral trends, particularly for underserved youth. Youth development programs try to promote positive curricular and extra-curricular student-adult working relationships in an effort to create environments that mature lives and develop personal, social, and citizenship competencies (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 1999; Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004; Hughes & Curnan, 2000). The youth development approach empowers youth by fostering self-direction and skill development through encouraging personal responsibility in the health and physical, personal and social, cognitive and creative, vocational, and civic arenas (Hudson, 1997). Empowering relationships is encouraged in an effort to help youngsters avoid unnecessarily risky experiences, triumph over damaging experiences, and favor the pursuit of desirable, attainable outcomes (Kahne, Nagaoka, Brown, O'Brien, Quinn, & Thiede, 2001).

Responsibility-Based Programs

In the field of physical education, the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model (TPSR) (Hellison, 2003), aligns with the principles in the field of youth development. This model has been used in physical activity and other programs for an array of children and youth in a number of states and several other countries (Hellison & Walsh, 2002). To help explain what young people are to take responsibility for, the following five TPSR levels are presented:

- I. Self-control (respecting the rights and feelings of others)
- II. Participation and effort (teamwork, cooperation)
- III. Self-direction (working independently, developing personal plans)
- IV. Helping others and leadership (pro-social attitudes and behaviors, coaching, and other leadership roles)
- V. Outside the gym (taking responsibility at home, in the classroom, on the streets, etc.)

These responsibilities provide a framework for teaching personal and social responsibility. In addition, instructional strategies and a daily format have been created to help implement these five responsibilities, which promote empowerment and help youth understand and value the levels. They include awareness and direct instruction strategies prevalent at the beginning of a program, with individual and group decision-making strategies providing additional empowerment as the program progresses (Hellison, 2003).

Although TPSR is well known and used throughout the country and certain parts of the world, scholars such as Shields and Bredemeier (1995) and Newton and her associates (Newton, Sandberg, & Watson, 2001) have raised questions about the empirical evidence supporting the model. The most comprehensive TPSR review was conducted by Hellison and Walsh (2002). They reviewed 26 studies that have investigated the impact of TPSR on underserved youth since

its inception. In sum, 19 studies revealed the impact on program participants' improvements in in-program goals (e.g., respect, effort, self-direction, leadership), and 11 studies reported impact on transferring TPSR goals to program participants' lives outside the program. Nine of these studies were entirely based on qualitative data sources such as interviews, field notes, journals, and focus groups. While several studies have conducted evaluations on the efficacy of this model (Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001; Hellison & Wright, 2003), few TPSR studies have used validated psychometric instruments. To further understand the model's effectiveness, such quantitative data need to be collected. In addition, Hellison, Cutforth, Kallusky, Martinek, Parker, and Steihl (2000) claim that TPSR is an example of a youth development model. However, no systematic studies have provided such evidence.

Method

Participants and Program

The purpose of this study was to compare youth development outcomes of participants in a TPSR program to the same outcomes during their school day. This study used mixed methodology methods, which refers to the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The TPSR program called "The Coaching Club," used team sports as a vehicle for teaching participants to take responsibility for coaching themselves and for coaching, helping, and providing leadership for others in the program (Hellison, 2003). This particular Coaching Club was an extended day basketball program that took place for one hour per week for a full academic school year (14 sessions) at an inner city elementary school in a large metropolitan city. The participants were a group of nine boys and one girl in the fourth or fifth grade who reside in the school's local low income housing. All participants were African American and participated in the program ranging from 10 to 14 sessions.

Two research questions were addressed: (a) How do Coaching Club experiences compare to participants' school experiences in supporting youth development outcomes? (b) Is TPSR an effective youth development model for physical activity-based programs?

Design

The research methodology used to evaluate the impact of extended day programs is problematic according to Kahne and McLaughlin (1998). They argue that the characteristics of extended day programs, which include voluntary participation, erratic attendance, and vague outcomes, are not well suited to analysis by either case studies or quasi-experimental control group designs. Therefore, Kahne, Nagaoka, Brown, O'Brien, Quinn, & Thiede (2001) developed a four point Likert scale questionnaire to better address the efficacy of these programs. The items were taken from two scales: the "Sense of Belonging" scale developed by Midgley, Maehr, and Urdan (1993), and modifications of items from the "Social Support from Adults" scale developed by Connell, Grossman, and Resch (1995). These items were subjected to statistical treatment by Rasch analysis, including the fit statistic and personal reliability statistic, yielding a set of variables that are conceptually and empirically cohesive. In addition, 19 interviews with youth and 75 observations of youth in school and extended day programs were used to help validate these survey results. The result is a set of nine outcomes which support youth development, each with several questionnaire items: enjoy; respect; belonging, comfort and trust; monitor; community leader; support; valuable content; high expectations; and agency competence.

The two phases of this study included both administering the Kahne et al. (2001) questionnaire and conducting open-ended interviews with each program participant. They were asked to evaluate their Coaching Club experiences and school experiences in relation to the nine outcomes supporting youth development. Item difficulty scales were constructed so that the two

sets of scores could be calibrated and compared directly. The difference between the two experiences reflect the extent to which Coaching Club outperformed school, or school outperformed Coaching Club in supporting youth development outcomes. The difference in score aimed to be a useful indicator of the impact that both experiences have on supporting specific youth development outcomes.

The Kahne et al. (2001) questionnaire was also used as the prepared guide for the open-ended interviews. The nine youth development outcomes, each with several items provided what Patton (1990) refers to as the general interview guide approach. An interview guide is used to ask the same questions to each participant interviewed. It provides topics for the interviewer to explore, probe, and ask questions in a conversational manner to further illuminate a particular subject. In this type of interview, the actual wording of the questions can vary among participants, which is important because of the range in age and cognitive level of the participants.

Results

Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

The sections that follow describe the results for each of the nine outcomes. A statistical comparison between Coaching Club and school experiences provided a difference for each question yielding three categories: significantly more important ($<.05$), slightly more important ($<.10$), or no statistical difference ($>.10$). This was a two-tailed t-test since the difference between the two means could favor either group.

While the quantitative phase compared participants' perceptions in numerical form, it did not reveal interpretations of the questions or an elaboration of their responses. Therefore the qualitative phase explored, probed, and asked questions to further illuminate each answer using the questionnaire as an interview guide. The following categories provide the detailed outcomes for both quantitative and qualitative phases.

Table 1. Enjoy

Items	Significance	Direction
I really want to be there	p < .10	Coaching Club
I wish I could spend more time there	p < .05	Coaching Club
I enjoy what I do	p > .10	

In the interviews it was clear that the participants wanted to attend both school and Coaching Club. Most participants viewed them both as occupying their time. A fourth grader said, “If I’m in school, I’m not on the streets, and I want to learn more stuff, school stuff, and get an education.” Some participants wanted to be in school but not more than the regular school day. A fourth grader replied, “Sometimes I don’t want to be there, some teachers just don’t listen to me.”

Every student expressed wanting to spend more time in Coaching Club. A fifth grader answered, “I really want to be in the Coaching Club, it’s fun, it gives me something to do, like instead of sitting in the house all the time... there’s more things to do in my life and I got more things to learn.” Some participants attributed this to having opportunities to practice the TPSR levels. A fifth grader said, “It’s fun, I learn defense, discipline, workin’ together, and all that stuff. I enjoy helping other people and playing basketball.”

Table 2. Respect

Items	Significance	Direction
Don’t disrespect you	p < .10	Coaching Club
Don’t criticize you	p < .05	Coaching Club

The majority of participants did not see school or Coaching Club as disrespectful to them, but they seemed to comment more positively in ways they are treated in Coaching Club. A fourth grader explained, “...you all never treat me badly,

you all did the right thing and listen to me.” Another fourth grader said, “If were doin’ [negative] stuff, you all ask us to come sit down, you all don’t ever holler or nothing.”

Table 3. Belong/Comfort/Trust

Items	Significance	Direction
I feel like I belong	p > .10	
I trust the other students	p < .10	Coaching Club
I feel comfortable hanging out	p < .05	Coaching Club
I feel safe	p > .10	

Although the quantitative analysis was inconsistent concerning the theme surrounding the four questions in this category, interviews revealed a sense of protection in both Coaching Club and school. In response to feeling safe, a fifth grader

said, “[In school] no big people can mess with us.” Another fifth grader said, “I don’t have to go to a bad place, when I can be at [Coaching Club], so I won’t be in a bad place, I can be at a good place.” Similarly, most participants seemed trusting toward others in both environments.

Table 4. Monitor

Items	Significance	Direction
Pay attention to what's going on in your life	$p < .05$	Coaching Club
Point you in right direction when doing wrong	$p > .10$	

All participants felt Coaching Club instructors both pay attention to their lives and point them in the right direction. A fourth grader said, "When we talk you pay attention...you guys really listen to us and what we got to say." A fifth grade

explained, "Like you all always helpin' us. You all don't holler at us, some teachers holler...but see you all ain't like that, you all know how to control your temper and how to settle it."

Table 5. Community Leader

Items	Significance	Direction
Motivate to be a positive force in your community	$p > .10$	
I learn how to solve problems in society	$p > .10$	

The students viewed both school and Coaching Club as motivating them to be a positive force in their community. A fourth grader said, "[In school] they ain't pushing me, they encouraging me. [In Coaching Club] you all tell us how we can meet our goals and you all ain't pushin' us, but you all helpin' us...I trust you all to help me." A fifth grader said, "[In Coaching Club] you guys ask us if we doin' this stuff outside the school and

on the playground and stuff, the self-control, teamwork, and coachability [listening to student coaches]." The students were also very supportive of both school and Coaching Club in teaching them how to solve problems in society. A fifth grader said, "[Coaching Club] teaches us how to solve our problems and how to talk them out with your help. You just spend more time helpin' us [as opposed to school]."

Table 6. Support

Items	Significance	Direction
Gives you credit when you do something good	$p > .10$	
You would go to for help in an emergency	$p > .10$	
Get advice about a personal problem	$p > .10$	
Go to if you were really mad about something	$p < .05$	Coaching Club

All of the students said that Coaching Club and school gave them credit when they do something good. A fifth grader replied, "...like if I help somebody coach, [a Coaching Club instructor] come in and say, I like what you did today." A fourth grader said, "Every time I coach, you all be

yellin' like good job...you all be praisin' us cuz how we be doin' good." Another fourth grader answered, "[In school] they give you a snack for an award...in assembly we get awards for the year." In response to the students going to an adult at school or in Coaching Club with an

emergency, a personal problem, or if they were mad about something, the data were mixed. The interviews were more supportive of Coaching Club in going to adults if they were mad about something. A fifth grader said, "If I'm mad, I'd come to you all, you all are the only people that

listen and stuff." When asked if he would go to school he replied, "no." A fourth grader said, "I wouldn't want my temper to come on, that's why I should tell you [Coaching Club instructors] ...you all could help me out with it and it won't really go off."

Table 7. Valuable Content

Items	Significance	Direction
I learn important things	$p < .10$	School
I grow and mature	$p > .10$	
I am getting prepared for a successful future	$p > .10$	
I get a lot out of it	$p > .10$	

The students rated school higher than Coaching Club in learning important things. They viewed academics as more important than Coaching Club activities. A fifth grader said, "...you do more things like reading and stuff [in school than in Coaching Club]. In response to getting a lot out of it, growing and maturing, and getting ready for a successful future, the data were positive for both Coaching Club and school. A fourth grader said, "I learn more stuff in school...I'm growing in my mind." Another fourth grader said, "We can get an education [through school] and get a job."

For Coaching Club, central themes included helping them with athletic skills to become professional athletes, helping them solve problems, and helping them to work together. A fifth grader said, "It's like when I grow up I want to be a basketball player, and you all teaching me how to shoot and make shots and stuff." Another fifth grader said, "[Coaching Club] teaches me how to solve problems, how to do new things, and how to take what I know and teach it to somebody else...helpin' the other children with self-control and teamwork."

Table 8. High Expectations

Items	Significance	Direction
I feel pushed to do my best	$p > .10$	
The work is challenging	$p < .05$	School

The qualitative data were mixed for these two questions. Some viewed being pushed as a positive experience and some a negative one. A fourth grader said, "No not that much [in school]... You all [in Coaching Club] don't push us, you all help us, you all be tryin' to encourage us and help us." Another fourth grader explained, "Yeah I agree [school pushes me] ...you all [in

Coaching Club] push us forward and so we can do better in school and stuff, and we can grow up and be a good man or woman and learn how not to argue over things." Most participants viewed school as more challenging than Coaching Club. A fifth grader said, "[In school] there's some stuff I don't know. I have to do it and the teacher ain't

gonna be able to help you, like on the [standardized tests].” Comments toward Coaching Club were based more on physical activity rather than TPSR goals. A fifth grader said, “[In Coaching

Club] there’s like some shots you can’t make and stuff...you gotta shoot and get the ball around to everybody before you get a shot...people come out and block the ball...it’s really challenging.”

Table 9. Agency Competence

Items	Significance	Direction
Helped plan activities or events	$p < .10$	Coaching Club
Made sure others followed rules	$p > .10$	
Helped solve a conflict or an argument	$p < .10$	Coaching Club
Been trusted with important tasks	$p > .10$	
Done things that help those in your school/community	$p > .10$	
Been in charge of a group of people	$p < .10$	Coaching Club
Counseled or tutored others	$p > .10$	

Most participants have been in charge of a group and been trusted with important tasks in both Coaching Club and school. However, Coaching Club integrated these experiences into its curriculum while participants experienced this in school on their own. A fifth grader said, “When I coach I’m in charge of the team.” Another fifth grader replied, “I’ve been a coach and I’ve been helping people with their shots and lay-up drills.” A fourth grader explained how he has been in charge of a group of people in school, “Kind of in my reading group, I’m one of the smartest kids in there...I help people with their math too.” In response to being trusted with important tasks, a fourth grader answered, “[In Coaching Club] they trust me how to lead the club...they let me talk to the whole team.”

Summary and Conclusions

The effectiveness of Coaching Club was examined using a form of mixed methodology. Two research questions were addressed: (a) How do Coaching Club experiences compare to participants’ school experiences in supporting youth development outcomes? (b) Is TPSR an effective youth development model for physical activity-based programs? In the quantitative phase of the study, participants were generally positive toward both Coaching Club and school.

However, statistically significant differences in favor of Coaching Club were found in the following outcomes: two of the three items in the enjoy category; both items in the respect category; two of the four items in the belong, comfort, and trust category; one item in both the monitor and support categories, and three of the seven items in the agency competence category. School outscored Coaching Club in one item in both the valuable content and high expectations categories.

The qualitative phase of the study helped expand the results from the quantitative phase. In the interviews participants were generally supportive of both Coaching Club and school. However, the difference was in their ability to give more specific examples of Coaching Club experiences. Overall, participants explained how they really enjoy Coaching Club and would like to spend more time there. They felt very respected and commented how positively treated they were. They described Coaching Club as providing a sense of protection with adults who pay attention to their lives. They perceived Coaching Club as motivating them to be role models in their community, showing them how to solve problems in society, and how to resolve confrontations without adult interference. They felt Coaching Club instructors gave a lot of positive reinforcement and expressed their comfort in

talking to them if they were really mad about something. They experienced being challenged and encouraged in doing their best versus being pushed or indoctrinated.

The field of youth development has become an interdisciplinary approach to working with children and youth, families, and communities. Various fields such as social work, counseling, psychology, and education have adopted youth development concepts. However, the field of physical education is behind the times in their practices and approach to youth development concepts. Separate studies by Spady, Larson, and Verba and associates (cited in Kahne et al., 2001) found that physical activity programs have not been shown to be effective compared to other extended day programs. While they have provided safe and enjoyable opportunities, they have been criticized for not providing strong life skill development or long term relationships between adults and youth.

TPSR seems to be an effective example of a youth development model for physical activity-based programs in the way its principles align with those in the field of youth development. The model's convictions, instructional strategies, daily format, and levels of responsibility all provide a systematic way of teaching youth development concepts and outcomes for many reasons. First, the social interactions and relationships formed between participants and instructors in TPSR programs take precedence over the physical activity content. Second, TPSR provides opportunities for participants to take on leadership and helping roles, which enhance a sense of belonging and ownership of a program. Third, teaching important life skills—which does not happen automatically—has been the fulcrum of effective youth development programs. TPSR integrates both physical activity and life skills seamlessly rather than attempting to teach these topics separately. Finally, youth development programs should assist in the transference of skills gained in their program to different contexts. The fifth TPSR responsibility, outside

the gym, enables participants to discuss, try out, and reflect on the potential of transferring the life skills taught in the program to other areas of life.

Physical activity-based programs have tremendous potential to positively help children and youth navigate their way into adulthood. Whether these programs are in-school physical education classes, extended day programs, organized sport, or intramurals, the potential impact has less to do with the structure of the program and more to do with its philosophy, goals, and strategies. With a youth development focus, and in particular with the guidance of TPSR, such programs can help youngsters explore personal and social values, while helping them make good decisions that will enhance a sense of purpose, meaning, and hopefulness in their lives.

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Dr. David Walsh is a faculty member in the Department of Kinesiology at San Francisco State University.