Intervening for Critical Consciousness: Examining the Potential of Promoting Self-Efficacy in Urban Youth through a Youth Leadership Program Pilot

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INTRODUCTION
• The E-Responder Youth Leadership Program (YLP) was developed in response to reports from the community that online provocations were escalating in to in-person gun violence among youth at risk for gang involvement in New York City
• The YLP is a strengths-based, sociopolitically-informed, 24-lesson curriculum that addresses emotional expression, power and oppression, critical consumption of content, and activism (Linehan, 1993; Nelson-Gray et al., 2006; Watts, Williams & Jagers, 2003)
• Preliminary results from a pilot implementation support the YLP’s effectiveness in preventing violence and increasing youths’ pro-social behavior (Sichel, Javadani, Ueberall & Liggett, in press)
• However, little is known about the relation between critical consciousness and long-term wellbeing, or implications of sociopolitical interventions for the ways in which youth perceive society and social interactions, or their long-term wellbeing

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

MEASURES
Critical Consciousness Scale: sub-scales address perceived inequality and endorsement of egalitarian ideals: 13 items, six-point Likert, “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017)

Perceived Discrimination: addresses frequency of perceived discrimination (general) across five settings: school, playground, while shopping, on the street, and in a public setting; five-point Likert, “never” to “almost daily”

General Self-Efficacy Scale: statements address one’s perceived ability to cope and solve problems; 10-items, four-point Likert, “not at all true” to “exactly true” (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)

METHODS & MATERIALS
E-RESPONDER YLP
• Implementation of the 12-week YLP curriculum took place during six months in 2016; data were collected at three time points: immediately before, immediately after, and six-months post Intervention

DESIGN
• Secondary analysis of de-identified quantitative survey data and focus groups transcripts from 12 groups (6 with staff, 6 with youth
• Participants: 81 NYC Youth (YLP, n=70; Control, n=11), and group facilitators

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION
• The YLP was implemented by Violence Prevention Professionals (VPPs) via a quasi-experimental, naturalistic, pilot in four sites in New York City (1 school, 3 community organizations). A fifth site served as a control

ANALYSIS & RESULTS
• As indicated in Table 1, self-efficacy is significantly positively correlated with the endorsement of egalitarian ideals, and negatively correlated with perceived discrimination in baseline measurements
• Descriptive analyses suggest a trend such that youth in the E-Responder condition increased in measures relevant to critical consciousness over time, unlike those in the control. This was supported by feedback from youth and facilitators

E-Responder appeared to be protective for youths’ self-efficacy over time:
“...There was a lot of ‘oh snap’ moments. It forced us to think a lot deeper about what is going on around us and what were in the [YLP videos]...I knew a lot of this stuff, but learned the vocabulary that made it easier to talk about and express our opinions.”
– YLP Participant

Table 1. Baseline Bivariate Correlations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Critical Consciousness: Egalitarianism</th>
<th>Critical Consciousness: Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>Perceived Discrimination</th>
<th>Self-Efficacy</th>
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<td>Variance 3.00</td>
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<td>Variance 6.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“Every class it felt like we had a new break through with one of the kids. There was no space to talk about these things [before], and the YLP provided the space and examples they needed to get it started.”
– YLP Facilitator

DISCUSSION
• Exploratory analyses support E-Responder as an intervention that increases critical consciousness, and protects against long-term deprivations of self-esteem
• The negative correlation between perceived discrimination and self-efficacy may reflect the activating force of egalitarian views
• The positive association between egalitarianism and self-efficacy may be related to the activating force of egalitarian views
• Limitations of the current study include size/power; future implementations should make use of larger control groups so as to allow for better comparisons

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NOTES
Note: N = 62-67. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.001.