

Contributions of 4-H Participation in the Development of Social Capital

Introduction

First...

The study of social capital in California is a part of a 22 multi-state partnership. Our partners represent the geographic, cultural, social and economic diversity of the U.S. The uniqueness of 4-H, namely the program's long standing history of providing quality youth development experiences, is the centerpiece of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of how youth members benefit from social capital.

An anticipated project outcome is a comprehensive understanding of social capital in the 4-H program as well as its impact on social capital in their community.

Project outcomes will help Extension, youth development practitioners and 4-H volunteers to develop varied programming opportunities for youth that will also contribute to the development of social capital within the community.

Method

The multi-method research approach for this project includes two primary components:

- Youth member interviews
- Survey of youth and community members

Results

Data from this study are currently being analysed with results expected in the Summer, 2013.

Information obtained in the interviews and in the surveys of youth and community members will provide a more comprehensive view of the 4-H Program and its impact on social capital than one approach alone (Creswell, 1998). One reason for conducting interviews is because it is an important means for data collection because, as Robert Weiss explains, "interviewing gives us a window on the past. We can also, by interviewing, learn about settings that would otherwise be closed to us . . ." (Weiss, 1995). The analysis of the interviews will consist of identifying emergent, redundant themes, coding those redundant themes and establish patterns and narratives and connecting them to established theoretical frameworks. These results will be triangulated with quantitative data, namely surveys, to provide evidence of a clearer understanding of the data. The interpretation of the data will consist of a vigorous analysis of both types of data, resulting in a fairly comprehensive understanding of social capital in the 4-H program as well as its impact on social capital in their community.

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Youth engagement educators are looking for strategies to engage youth and to understand the impact of youth engagement on community change work. In fact, "there is a need for Extension agents, program developers, and policy planners to better understand the role of youth in the community development process. Equally important, a need exists to better recognize the benefits and opportunities presented through youth involvement in community development activities. Extension plays a vital role in engaging youth through interactions with the local community, particularly in the implementation of 4-H programs." (Brennan, Barnett, Baugh, 2007)

Aim

Our research will determine how these unique partnerships contribute to the wellbeing of youth and of the greater community in which the 4-H youth development program is based

We will explore the role of 4-H community-focused programming in developing social capital not only for youth participants, but also for the community at large

We hypothesize that where these programs are strong, they result in a spiraling up of social capital across the community, leading to expanded opportunities for youth development while building overall community capacity for civic engagement and community betterment



Youth Connecting through 4-H SET in Los Angeles County.

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