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Promoting Positive Youth Development through Teenagers-as-Teachers Programs

What do adolescents describe as their own growth through participating in a teenagers-as-teachers program?

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Introduction

- A promising approach to support positive youth development is having adolescents serve as a teacher of younger children, also known as cross-age teaching.
- Previous studies demonstrated these roles provide benefits to teenagers, children, and communities.
- However, there has been very little qualitative empirical work to understand experiences from young peoples' point-of-view and why they thought these experiences were important, significant, or meaningful.

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

- PYD frameworks promote holistic perspective of well-being and emphasize the interdependent role of individual agency and supportive environments.
- The Five Cs of PYD is a prominent model advancing five youth outcomes: competence, confidence, connection, character, caring that lead to a sixth C – contribution.

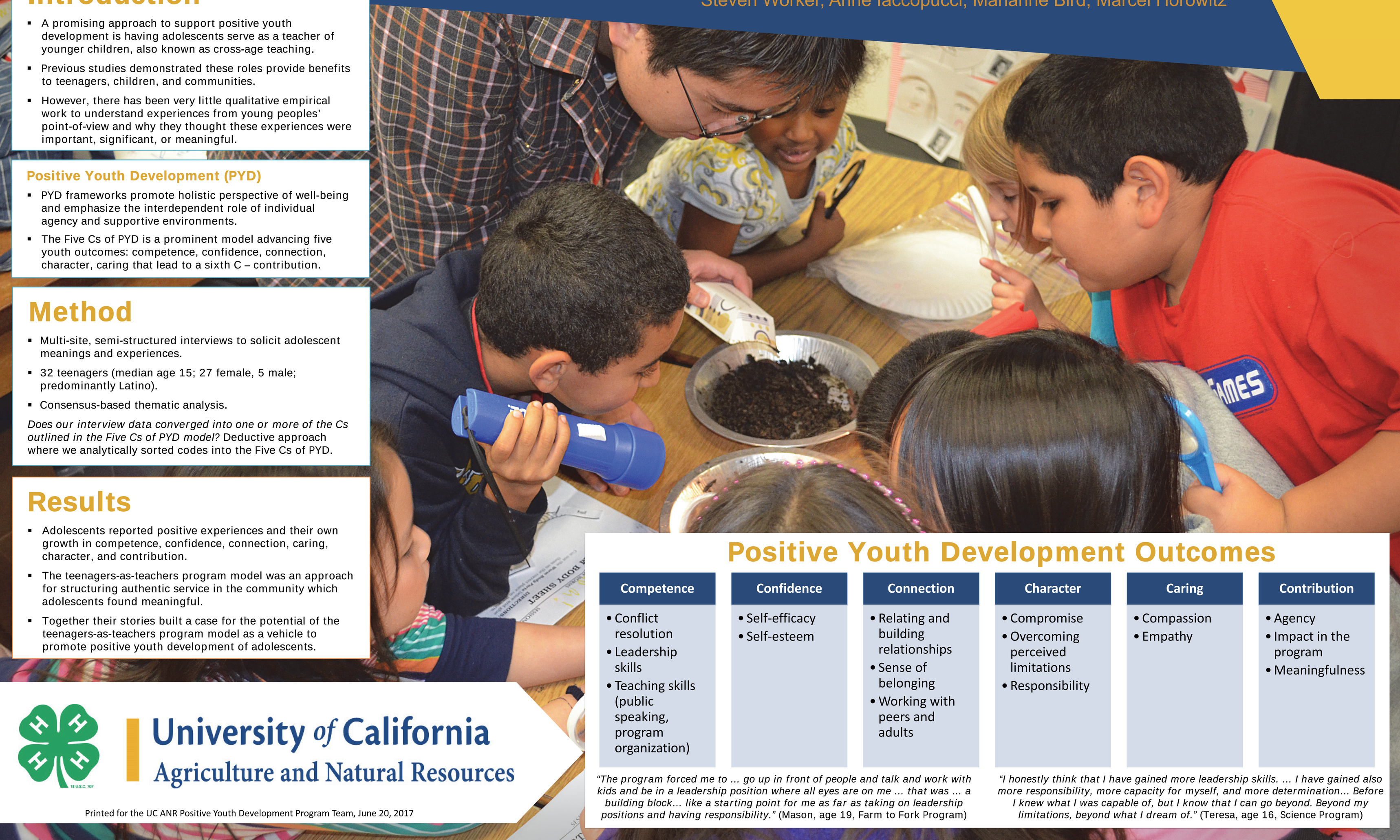
Method

- Multi-site, semi-structured interviews to solicit adolescent meanings and experiences.
- 32 teenagers (median age 15; 27 female, 5 male; predominantly Latino).
- Consensus-based thematic analysis.

Does our interview data converged into one or more of the Cs outlined in the Five Cs of PYD model? Deductive approach where we analytically sorted codes into the Five Cs of PYD.

Results

- Adolescents reported positive experiences and their own growth in competence, confidence, connection, caring, character, and contribution.
- The teenagers-as-teachers program model was an approach for structuring authentic service in the community which adolescents found meaningful.
- Together their stories built a case for the potential of the teenagers-as-teachers program model as a vehicle to promote positive youth development of adolescents.



Positive Youth Development Outcomes

Competence	Confidence	Connection	Character	Caring	Contribution
• Conflict resolution • Leadership skills • Teaching skills (public speaking, program organization)	• Self-efficacy • Self-esteem	• Relating and building relationships • Sense of belonging • Working with peers and adults	• Compromise • Overcoming perceived limitations • Responsibility	• Compassion • Empathy	• Agency • Impact in the program • Meaningfulness

"The program forced me to ... go up in front of people and talk and work with kids and be in a leadership position where all eyes are on me ... that was ... a building block... like a starting point for me as far as taking on leadership positions and having responsibility." (Mason, age 19, Farm to Fork Program)

"I honestly think that I have gained more leadership skills. ... I have gained also more responsibility, more capacity for myself, and more determination... Before I knew what I was capable of, but I know that I can go beyond. Beyond my limitations, beyond what I dream of." (Teresa, age 16, Science Program)

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