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ABSTRACT

Reducing Youth Violence: The Role of Afterschool Programs

By

Cordero Tanner

July 30, 2015

INTRODUCTION: Youth violence is a significant public health problem that exists in the United States. In 2014, about 13 youth in the United States were victims of homicide each and every day and an additional 1,642 youth needed medical care because of physical assault-related injuries. Guided by social cognitive theory, it is understood that to inform youth development and decision making, youth need to be placed in structures where they are able to avoid violent situations, learn to solve problems non-violently by enhancing their peer relationships, learn how to interpret behavioral cues, and improve their conflict resolution skills. One such promising prevention strategy possibility is ensuring broad access to after-school programs that include such a structure. The purpose and plan for this capstone is to review the problem of youth violence, examine associated factors, and articulate a theoretical basis for after-school programs as a prevention strategy. The end product will be a policy brief, informing policymakers of the potential after-school programs have to help reduce youth violence in the United States.

METHODS: The scholarly literature was used to gather data on the problem of youth violence and to review and identify prevention strategies to reduce the problem. The after-school setting was identified as viable to prevention efforts. The capstone identified effective after-school programs that focused on youth exposure to violence. These programs will be identified and summarized in this paper. The databases used in this literature review were EBSCO and PubMed. This capstone also used additional resources such as programs websites, strategic guides, and manuals that related to violence, youth development, after-school programs, and prevention.

DISCUSSION: While after-school programs are a viable option for reducing youth violence, barriers exist that limit access to these programs. A review of the literature shows that over eleven million children are without supervision between the hours of 3 and 6 PM (O'Donnell, P. & Ford, J., 2013). The major reason for this is that limited funding goes into after-school programs. While using the social-cognitive theory to address individual and relationships factors that youth violence is important, that only addresses a portion of the issue. The upstream environmental factors have to be addressed as well, in particular policies that shape the communities in which youth live. After the literature review, it is understood that there is a need to reduce youth violence and after-school programs are a viable option. This paper identifies two recommendations 1) implementing policy interventions and 2) state-run after-school systems.

SEARCH TERMS: afterschool programs, youth, exposure, violence, prevention, interventions, adolescent, delinquency, and out-of-school time

Reducing Youth Violence: The Role of Afterschool Programs

by

Cordero Tanner

B.S., Sociology
Virginia Tech

A Capstone Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Georgia State University in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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Cordero Tanner

Approved:

Rodney Lyn, PhD
Committee Chair

John Steward, MPH
Committee Member

July 30, 2015
Date

Author's Statement Page

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Introduction

Youth violence is defined as involving young persons, typically children, adolescents, and young adults between the ages of 10 and 24 (CDC, 2014). Aggressive behaviors such as verbal abuse, bullying, hitting, slapping, or fighting are included in youth violence. Youth violence also includes serious violent and delinquent acts such as aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and homicide, committed by and against youth. This is a significant public health problem that exists in the United States. In 2014, approximately 13 youth in the United States were victims of homicide every day and an additional 1,642 youth needed medical care because of physical assault-related injuries (CDC, 2014). In the same year, 1 in 4 high school students reported being in at least one physical fight and 1 in 5 students reported being bullied (CDC, 2013). Exposure to violence puts victims at higher risk for other physical and mental health problems, including increased chances of smoking, obesity, high-risk sexual behavior, asthma, depression, academic problems, and suicide (Arseneault L., Walsh, E., Trzeniewski K., Newcombe R., Caspi A., 2006). When it comes to youth violence, youth are often the ones hurting other youth and are responsible for a major proportion of violence in communities. In 2012, youth ages 10 to 24 years accounted for 40 percent of all arrests for violent crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). Each year youth homicides and violence-related injuries resulted in over \$17.5 billion in medical care and lost work costs (CDC, 2014). These injuries contribute to the increase in health care costs for all, decrease property values, and interfere with connectedness of communities (Mercy, J. Butchart, A. Farrington, D., Cerda, M., 2002).

All young people are at risk of being affected by violence whether they are perpetrators, victims, or witnesses. There is variance by community in the rates and types of violence youth encounter, and these differences can be attributed to varied exposure to risk and protective

factors. There are racial disparities in exposure to violence. For example, in 2011 the homicide rate for African American youth (28.8 per 100,000) was 13.7 times higher than the rate for white youth (2.1 per 100,000) and 14.4 times higher for Asian/Pacific Islander youth (2 per 100,000) (CDC, 2013). Homicide is the leading cause of death for African American youth, the second leading cause for Hispanic youth, the third leading cause for American Indian/Alaska Natives, and the fourth leading cause of death for white and Asian/Pacific Islander youth (CDC, 2014).

Statistics also show disparate exposure to violence by sex. In 2011, the youth homicide rate was 6 times higher among males (12.3 per 100,000) than females (2.1 per 100,000) (CDC, 2014). Non-fatal, physical assault-related emergency room visits were 1.6 times higher for males (1,141 per 100,000) than females (704 per 100,000) (CDC, 2014). Males in high school were also 1.6 times more likely to be involved in physical fights than female students (CDC, 2013). In contrast, high school girls (24 percent) were more likely than male students (16 percent) to report being a victim of bullying at school (CDC, 2013). Furthermore, in 2012, over 30,830 females aged 10-24 were arrested for violent crimes, including robbery, aggravated assault, and murder (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). These statistics show that although physical violence disproportionately affects male youth, violence is not just a problem among males.

Because the impact of youth violence is far reaching, it is a public health issue. Not only does youth violence have an impact on the victim, but other issues come to mind as well. Youth that participate in violent acts are subjected to the juvenile justice system. The juvenile justice system focuses on matters related to delinquent behavior through police, court, and correctional involvement (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2014).; In recent history the juvenile system has modeled itself after the criminal justice system and therefore taken a more punitive than restorative approach. Since the sentencing policies have moved from a

rehabilitation model, an increased number of youth have been tried as adults and sent to adult prisons (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2014). Studies have shown that youth that are transferred to the criminal justice system from the juvenile system are more likely to reoffend, reoffend at higher rates, and commit more serious offenses at a later time (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2014). Young offenders are also faced with an array of adjustment problems when they leave the justice systems. School systems may not be receptive to working with them and may keep them in special classrooms. Violence and risk behaviors may occur in area in which they live. Finally, their peers may encourage (more) criminal activity (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2014).

Youth violence also impacts academic outcomes; research shows that many underperforming schools also deal with high levels of violence on a daily basis. In Chicago, of the approximately 100 high schools in the city, two-thirds required police intervention for at least one violent incident during the 2010 school year, and one-quarter of the schools called 17 times or more (Burdick-Will, J., 2013). Using crime data from the Chicago Police Department and administrative records from the Chicago Public Schools, the crime data shows an inverse relationship between school violent crime and standardized math scores. The correlation was -0.193 between school violent crime and standardized math scores and -0.1 for grades (Burdick-Will, J., 2013).

As previously noted, violence varies across communities. Although no community is exempt, what does differ are the subgroups of youth at greatest risk, the factors that influence violence, the specific types of youth violence experienced, and the consequences for violent actions. Youth violence is not the result of one factor, but it is influenced by the interactions between individuals in relationships, community, and societal risk and protective factors that

impact youth overtime (CDC, 2014).

After-school programs are a method to help reduce youth violence. Because the hours between 3:00 and 6:00 PM are considered peak hours for risky behaviors, after-school programs have the potential to fill the void. Literature shows that there are two reasons why after-school programs are critical settings through which to support children's development (Frazier et al., 2007, p. 411). First, health promotion is already a major goal of after-school programs, whose activities promote building social skills (Gottfredson et al., 2004, p. 291). Secondly, after-school programs have been statistically proven to improve children's psychosocial and academic outcomes, especially low-income children.

Purpose of the Capstone

Guided by social cognitive theory, it is understood that to inform youth development and decision making, youth need to be placed in structures where they are able to avoid violent situations, learn to solve problems nonviolently by enhancing their peer relationships, learn how to interpret behavioral cues, and improve their conflict resolution skills. One such promising prevention strategy possibility is ensuring broad access to after-school programs that include such a structure. The purpose and plan for this capstone is to review the problem of youth violence, examine associated factors, and articulate a theoretical basis for after-school programs as a prevention strategy. The end product will be a policy brief, informing policymakers of the potential after-school programs have to help reduce youth violence in the United States.

Approach Section

The scholarly literature was used to gather data on the problem of youth violence and to review and identify prevention strategies to reduce the problem. The after-school setting was identified as viable to prevention efforts. The capstone identified effective after-school programs that focused on youth exposure to violence. These programs will be identified and summarized in this paper.

Database

The databases used in this literature review were EBSCO and PubMed. This capstone also used addition resources such as programs websites, strategic guides, and manuals that related to violence, youth development, after-school programs, and prevention. Search terms used during the topical review were after-school programs, youth, exposure, violence, prevention, interventions, adolescent, delinquency, and out-of-school time.

Literature Review

Statistics and demographics

The National Research Council defined violence as a “behavior by persons against persons that intentionally threatens, attempts, or actually inflicts physical harm” (National Committee for Injury Prevention and Control, 2012). Youth violence refers to harmful behaviors that start early and continue into young adulthood. Youth violence varies in form, and some acts such as bullying, slapping, or punching not only cause physical harm but often cause emotional harm as well. Other assaults (with or without weapons) or risky behaviors can lead to serious injury and even death. Because of the impact on the health and well-being of youth, violence is a public health issue. Young people in every community are involved in violence, whether the community is a small town or a large urban city, a neatly groomed suburb, or an isolated rural area with miles of land separating homes.

Of the various types of violence, homicide is the most serious outcome. While youth homicide is at a 30-year low, it is still the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 (CDC, 2014). Among African-Americans 10 to 24 years old, homicide is the leading cause of death. Homicide is the second leading cause for Hispanics and the third for American Indians and Alaska Natives (CDC, 2014). National databases were used to determine the number of homicides among youth, persons under the age of 24. From 1985 until 1993 the overall rate of youth homicides went up 83% (CDC, 2014). From 1994 to 1999 the homicide rates declined 41%, while in the years 2000 between 2010 the rate dropped about 1% a year (CDC, 2014)). In 2012, 4,787 young people were victims of homicide, a rate that averages out to be 13 deaths each day. This is the lowest that this rate has been in about three decades (CDC, 2014).

In the year 2012, over 600,000 young people were treated for physical assault injuries. This large number means that an average of 1,642 young were treated for injuries each day during that year. A national survey showed that within the twelve months before the survey, 24.7 percent of high school students reported being in a physical fight (CDC, 2012). Of those that reported being in a physical fight at school, 16 percent were male student and 7.8 percent were female students (CDC, 2011). 5.9 percent of students reported not going to school one or more days and 17.9 percent reported taking a weapon to school because of the threat of violence or not feeling safe on school property. Data collected from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System in 2011 shows that 20.1 percent of students reported being bullied at school. Rates were higher among girls (22 percent) than among boys (18.2 percent) (CDC, 2011).

Rates of violence vary by sex and by race or ethnicity. In “Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General,” self-reported rates of youth involvement in serious violent behavior were examined during two critical periods, 1983 to 1993 and 1993 to 1998 (US DHHS, 2001). Findings show that in 1983 and 1993, for every violent act committed by a female youth, at least seven violent acts were committed by males (US DHHS, 2001). And in 1998, female youth reduced the ratio to 3.5 to 1, meaning that for every three acts by males there was one by young females (US DHSS, 2001). Differences were also shown according to race among American youth. Statistics show that incident rates for committing crimes are lower for white youth than black youth (US DHHS, 2001). During the periods between 1983 to 1998 the ratio was about 1.5 to 1, meaning that 1.5 violent acts were committed by black youth for every 1 violent act by white youth.

The United States Department of Justice’s juvenile arrest report displayed huge differences between youth arrest rates according to both sex and race between 1999 and 2008.

Seven times as many males were arrested for homicide than females in 2008 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). While the number of robberies increased 25%, youth arrests totals for aggravated assault decreased to about 21% (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). The statistics show that overtime, just like with the self-reported rates of violent behavior, the arrest gap between males and females decreased. Arrests records show that although black youth only account for 16% of the youth population in the United States, they accounted for 52% of juvenile violent crime arrests (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). In 2008, the black youth percentages of arrests for homicide, robbery, aggravated assault, and rape were 58%, 67%, 42%, and 37% respectively. By 1999, the ratio between black and white youth arrests was 4 to 1 and in 2008 the disparity increased to 5 to 1 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). These results show a smaller statistical gap between ethnic groups.

Comparing gang association by area type, the National Gang Center defines the prevalence of gang membership for youth as of 2011. In large cities youth gang membership is made up of 45.5 percent Hispanic, 39 percent black, 9.7 percent white, and 5.8 percent other (National Gang Center, 2011). Suburban county gangs makeup includes 51.0 percent Hispanic, 32.7 percent black, 9.1 percent white and 7.2 percent other (National Gang Center, 2011). In smaller cities Hispanics make up 53.8 percent of gang membership, 20.3 percent for blacks, 14.6 percent for whites, and 11.3 percent other (National Gang Center, 2011). In rural counties blacks make up the majority of membership with 56.8 percent, Hispanics are 24.8 percent, 14.9 for whites, and 3.4 percent for others (National Gang Center, 2011). As the statistics show, Hispanic and black youth dominate gang membership in all four areas. The prevalence of white membership is low in large areas, but much higher in smaller environments.

Nationwide studies on school homicides by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with the United States Departments of Education and Justice identified 68 youth killed on or near school-grounds or at school-related events (Kachur et al., 1996). The study showed that those youth that had the greatest risk of being killed were minorities in high school, and from urban school districts (Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General). The same study showed that offenders and victims both have the same aforementioned characteristics and motives for homicide: personal disputes with other youth or gang-connected activity (Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General).

Contributing factors to Youth Violence

Youth violence is not a result of one factor, but it is influenced by numerous factors that come together to influence young people's behaviors. These contributing factors are individual, relationship, community, and societal risk and protective factors. When combined, all of these factors can either increase or decrease the likelihood that youth will be exposed to violence. Risk factors are characteristics that can contribute to an individual being violent or victimized. The study of risk factors is complex because being exposed does not mean that the individual will be violent. Protective factors act as a buffer to decrease the likelihood that a person will become violent or victimized. Both risk and protective factors need to be closer examined to understand their potential impact in reducing youth violence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Disparities in youth violence occur because some communities and subgroups of youth are faced with more risks and fewer protective influences than others (CDC, 2014). The disparity is significant because research shows that individuals with more protective factors and less risk factors are less likely to engage in violence (Pollard, J.A., Hawkins, D., Arthur, M.W., 1999; Resnick, M.D., Ireland, M., Borowsky, I., 2004; Stouthamer-Loeber M., Loeber, R., Wei,

E., Farrington, D.P., Wikstrom, P.O., 2002). The positive aspect of these findings is that many risk and protective factors can be changed to reduce youth violence.

The various experiences and traits that individual youth have are influential in determining their likelihood of experiencing violence. Known individual-level risk factors include impulsiveness, substance abuse, antisocial or aggressive beliefs and attitudes, poor academic performance, and a history of exposure to violence or abuse (Farrington, D., 2003; Farrington D.P., Loeber, R., Ttofi, M.M., 2012; Herrenkohl, T.L., Farrington, D.P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R.F., Harachi, T.W., Cothorn, L., 2000). Access to a firearm is also a risk factor that contributes to lethal youth violence (Hardy, M.S., 2006). Protective individual-level factors include developing social, problem-solving, and emotional control skills as well as ensuring youth's school readiness and academic achievement (Resnick, M.D., Ireland, M., Borowsky, I., 2004; Farrington D.P., Loeber, R., Ttofi, M.M., 2012).

The quality of relationships youth have with family, friends, teachers, and community members can influence young people's behavioral choices, exposure to violence, and perception of what is acceptable. When youth live in home environments where there are constant parental conflicts, poor parental attachment, minimal supervision, and inconsistent and harsh discipline, the likelihood of violence increases (Farrington, D., 2003; Farrington D.P., Loeber, R., Ttofi, M.M., 2012; Herrenkohl, T.L., Farrington, D.P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R.F., Harachi, T.W., Cothorn, L., 2000). Research shows that even if adults are not supportive when they encourage youth to use non-violent ways to solve problems and break up altercations, these actions contribute to youth's beliefs about violence and decrease the likelihood that youth will be violent (Williams, K.R. & Guerra, N.G., 2007). The wellbeing of youth and the choices they make can be strengthened through positive and nurturing relationships with caring adults. Those youth

with friends that participate in violent behaviors are more likely to engage in those activities (Farrington D.P., Loeber, R., Ttofi, M.M., 2012; Herrenkohl, T.L., Farrington, D.P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R.F., Harachi, T.W., Cothorn, L., 2000). Other relationships that have been found to decrease violent behavior are positive connections to school and school personnel, as well as peers that demonstrate non-violent behavior (Aisenberg, E., Herrenkohl, T., 2008; Williams K.R., Guerra, N.G., 2007).

Both the individual and his or her relationships are placed in settings. These settings are community level factors; they can include schools, businesses, and neighborhoods. The characteristics of these settings influence how people interact with one another and the likelihood that a person will participate in violence. Residential instability, overcrowded housing, large presence of alcohol vendors, poor economic growth, concentrated poverty, lack of resident relationships, and views of violence as acceptable are all risk factors for increased youth violence (Farrington D.P., Loeber, R., Ttofi, M.M., 2012; Herrenkohl, T.L., Farrington, D.P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R.F., Harachi, T.W., Cothorn, L., 2000; Sampson, R.J., Morenoff, J.D., Gannon-Rowley, T., 2002; Toomey, T.L., Erickson, D.J., Carlin, B.P., Lenk, K.M., Quick, H.S., Jones, A.M., Harwood, E.M., 2012). Other community risk factors that may increase the risk of youth violence are high levels of crime, gang related activity, unemployment, and drug use and sales. While research is limited on community factors that may provide buffers for youth violence, the current research does suggest that when youth have a sense of belonging, the residents' willingness to intervene to help others, and attachment to the community, these factors can reduce the levels of youth violence (Farrington et al., 2012).

Societal factors influence population-wide health and safety, including the rate of youth violence. Some societal factors include cultural norms about the acceptability of youth violence

and the enormous presence of health inequalities such as poverty and social disadvantage (Herrenkohl, T.L., Farrington, D.P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R.F., Harachi, T.W., Cothorn, L., 2000; Egerter, S., Barclay, C., Grossman-Kahn, R., Braveman, P., 2011). The presence of violence in the media and policies related to health, education, and economic opportunities can increase or decrease the risk of youth violence (Dahlberg, L.L., Krug, E.G., 2002). Societal factors can impact youth violence by contributing to inequities that increase risk and providing access to prevention resources.

Theoretical Basis for after-school programs

Social-cognitive theory, introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1986, theorizes that individuals learn social skills by interacting with parents, adults, peers, and others in their environment (Bandura, 1986). Bandura argues that behavior is caused by personal, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1986). If people are faced with situations for which they are unprepared emotionally and cognitively, they can react violently. Experts believe that a child's ability to avoid violent situations and solve problems non-violently improves when their social relationships with peers and conflict-resolution skills are developed (Nadel, H., Spellmann, M., Alvarez-Canino, T., Lausell-Bryant, L.L., Landsberg, G., 1996). Teaching children how to read behavioral cues and improving their conflict-resolution skills may also improve their ability to react more positively to situations (Nadel et al. 1996).

Most social-cognitive models of youth violence focus heavily on cognitive information-processing theory, emphasizing both social information-processing skills and the wealth of knowledge that individuals learn over time. In other words, these models are about developing skills so that when youth are placed in social situations they will be able to process the following questions: What happened and what does this mean? What do I want? What are my options?

What should I do? What are the consequences? Answers to these questions inform the actual actions they take in that situation (Guerra, N., 2010). Typically, the model addresses the beliefs and attitudes that support violent behavior and teach the following skills: negotiation, critical thinking, and decision making; identifying, managing, and coping with feelings; anticipating the consequences of one's aggressive behaviors; finding non-violent alternatives to conflict; and moral reasoning (Greene, 1998).

The cognitive system develops over time during childhood. The system is more receptive and most malleable to preventative methods at an early age, which is why it is important to use this proven method as an effective measure for preventing violence early in child development (Guerra, N., 2010).

After-school programs that use a social-cognitive model

After-school programs help to reduce youth violence because they offer alternative activities for children and youth during their out-of-school time. Several studies support the hypothesis that participation in youth development programs decreases involvement in high-risk activities (Quinn, 1999). Literature shows that there are two reasons why after-school programs are critical settings through which to support children's development (Frazier S. L., Cappella, E., and Atkins, M. S., 2007). First, health promotion is already a major goal of after-school programs, whose activities develop social skills (Gottfredson D. C., Gerstenblith, S. A., Soulé, D. A., Womer, S. C., & Lu, S., 2004). Secondly, after-school programs have been shown to improve children's psychosocial and academic outcomes, especially low-income children (Posner and Vandell, 1994; Mahoney J. L., Lord, H., and Carryl, E., 2005).

Across the country children that attend federally granted 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program have improved their reading and math grades by 43 percent and 42

percent respectively (Learning Point Associates, 2007). Additionally, LA's BEST after-school program participants are 20 percent less likely to drop out of school compared to non-participants (UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, June 2000, December 2005 and September 2007). After-school programs give children the opportunity to gain access to resources that they may not normally have such as help with homework, computers, tutors, test preparation, and school supplies.

After-school programs that focus on social-cognitive skill development have been shown to promote positive outcomes (Yoviene, L., 2012). The University of Chicago along with the organizations Youth Guidance and World Sport Chicago developed the program "Becoming a Man- Sports Edition" (BAM) that targeted disadvantaged male youth in the local school system. Over 2,000 at-risk male students were exposed to the program that focused on helping the youth develop social-cognitive skills (Yoviene, L., 2012). Some of the skills developed were learning to regulate emotions, controlling responses to stressful events, processing social information, conflict resolution, goal setting, and integrity (Yoviene, L., 2012). Students that participated in the program saw an increase in school engagement and performance; results also show a 44% decrease in violent crimes arrests and a 36% decrease in crimes such as vandalism among the participants (Yoviene, L., 2012).

Another study that focused on social-cognitive theory examined 68 after-school programs that had the specific goal of advancing personal and social development compared to youth that were not participating in these types of programs. To be a qualifying program, the after-school program had to be grounded in social cognitive theory. These programs used sequenced step-by-step SAFE training approach (S), emphasized active forms of learning by having youth practice news skills (A), focused specific times and attention on skill development (F), and were explicit

in defining the skills they were attempting to promote (E) (Durlak, J. & Weissberg, R., 2010). The findings of this study were clear and showed a significant improvement in self-perceptions, school bonding, positive social behaviors, reductions in violence, and increased academic achievement (Durlak, J. & Weissberg, R., 2010). Youth that were in SAFE after-school programs averaged an 8-percentile gain in standardized test scores, an increase of 11 percentile in positive social behaviors, and a 12-percentile reduction in problem behaviors (Durlak, J. & Weissberg, R., 2010).

These intervention findings suggest that after-school programs informed by social-cognitive theory hold promise for improving the well-being of participating youth. Programs based on this theory develop the necessary skills youth needed to handle encounters with violence. When implemented correctly, social-cognitive theory is a proven method to prevent youth violence in the United States.

The status of after-school in America

In the United States, after-school programs receive federal, state, or private funding to provide activities to youth during after-school hours. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is the only source of federal funding available to develop and provide quality after-school programs, which has remained stagnant for years even while costs of providing programs rise (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In 2012, just over 1.1 billion dollars was allocated to the 21st Century, leaving the program unable to fund over 75% of the grant requests that they received (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Experts estimate that it would cost 2.5 billion dollars to fully fund the programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Even with limited funding recent research shows that more children are in an after-school program than ever before in the United States. Today, of the forty-five million youth age 6-17, more than ten million (22%) children are enrolled in an after-school program, about four million more children enrolled than a decade ago (O'Donnell, P. & Ford, J., 2013). Along with the growth in enrollment, after-school programs have begun to increase program offerings and the quality of services offered. Afterschool programs are no longer only a safe, supervised environment for children during after-schools hours; they have evolved as valuable catalysts for helping students reach their full potential in school and life (O'Donnell, P. & Ford, J., 2013). Nearly 1 in 4 families has a child enrolled in an after-school program in the United States. While these numbers are good, there are still a large number of children left unsupervised between the hours of 3 and 6 PM. In 2012, over eleven million children were left unsupervised, meaning that 1 in 5 children did not have after-school supervision (O'Donnell, P. & Ford, J., 2013). Currently, approximately 19.4 million children (43%) who are not enrolled in an after-school would be able to enroll if one was available to them (O'Donnell, P. & Ford, J., 2013).

Types of after-school programs

Typically, there are three types of after-school programs in the United States: after-school educational programs, school-age childcare, and youth development programs (Snyder, H.N. & Sickmund, M.). After-school educational programs, which usually begin between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. and end around 6:00 p.m. on school days, focus on a wide variety of content. Staff for these programs can include teachers, trained youth workers, or teen-leaders (Newman, S.A., Fox, J.A., Flynn, E.A., Christenson, W., 2000). School-age care programs specifically care for the children's well-being and safety before and after-school hours and sometimes during summer months (Newman, S.A., Fox, J.A., Flynn, E.A., Christenson, W., 2000). These programs require licensing to cover program needs like facilities and staff. Youth development programs often build on strengths and focus on skills the children already have (Newman, S.A., Fox, J.A., Flynn, E.A., Christenson, W., 2000).

Two primary providers of after-school programs are community-based organizations and schools. Community-based organizations have historically been the main source of after-school activities (Goofman, J.A., 2000). Each of these organizations varies in their goals, content, structure, target population, and approach (Goofman, J.A., 2000). Examples of community-based organizations include five categories: national youth-serving organizations, public agency-sponsored programs, youth sports organizations, multi-service organizations, and independent youth organizations (Goofman, J.A., 2000). National youth-serving organizations include the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Boys Scouts, and Girls Scouts. Public agency sponsored programs are places like local libraries, and parks and recreation centers. Little League Baseball, American Youth Soccer, and Amateur Athletic Union are all examples of youth league organizations. Multi-service organizations are places that provide services other than after-school

programs like religious institutions and adult service clubs. Independent youth organizations are programs that start at the grassroots level and provide many services to youth (Newman, S.A., Fox, J.A., Flynn, E.A., Christenson, W., 2000).

More recently schools have also become involved in the implementation of after-school programs (Newman, S.A., Fox, J.A., Flynn, E.A., Christenson, W., 2000). Schools are usually involved with after-school programs in three ways. The first is a school-administered program, whereby the school district outlines standards that usually coincide with current classroom lessons (Newman, S.A., Fox, J.A., Flynn, E.A., Christenson, W., 2000). These programs also tend to be more focused on academics. Community-based organization administered programs are operated by the community organization but located in schools (Goofman, J.A., 2000). The final type of school involvement is school-community partnerships, programs in which the schools and community organizations work together to develop effective programs for the youth in the community (Goofman, J.A., 2000).

After-school systems

In the early 2000s, The Wallace Foundation began to work on the idea of building after-school systems that would help communities strengthen programs overall (Cummins, H.J., 2013). These systems work to procure the buy-in of an entire community, which is necessary to accomplish an after-school program's goals.. An after-school system includes all the groups in a geographic area that have a stake in quality after-school programs, the policies and regulations that influence relationships between these groups, and the funding needed (Donner, J., 2012). Building an after-school system ensures that programs have accountability, funding, and program quality standards.

One major component of after-school systems are intermediaries, which is a system by which the stakeholders in an after-school system are connected (Donner, J., 2012). Intermediaries also build the capacity for after-school programs and provide any training or technical assistance that the programs may need (Delale-O'Connor L. and Walker, K., 2012). When the intermediaries are free and independent, built systems are stronger, more versatile, and more responsive to the needs of the population that they serve (Delale-O'Connor L. and Walker, K., 2012). Intermediaries draw program providers, funders, policymakers, schools, and other stakeholders into alliances around issues of mutual importance (Donner, J., 2012). They are able to bring a wide range of organizations into a collaborative network that shares information. Intermediaries can generate support from large public and private funders more efficiently than one individual, small provider (Delale-O'Connor L. and Walker, K., 2012), which in turn makes for a greater scale of service provided. Receiving funding from large-scale funders allows intermediaries to develop quality assurance and accountability mechanisms for program providers (Donner, J., 2012). Another benefit of intermediaries is that training and professional

development opportunities that range across each stakeholder's expertise for after-school staff can be organized (Donner, J., 2012). Intermediaries are able to secure grants to conduct system-level evaluations because of their third party status, which allows for independence in managing data and reports on outcomes (Delale-O'Connor L. and Walker, K., 2012). Many funding methods for after-school programs call for conscious attention to developing policies and systems that ensure reliable and sustainable resources, an area in which intermediaries excel because of the specific expertise in the area.

After-school systems were built by a coalition of local organizations in several major cities including Baltimore, Chicago, and New York. Under Baltimore's After School Strategy, three organizations have worked together to build an infrastructure to support the expansion and improvement of after-school programs in the city. Each one of the organizations had the lead in the area that best fit the mission and goals of the system. The Safe and Sound Campaign leads advocacy, strategy development, and evaluation efforts (Bodilly, S., Sloan McCombs, J. et al., 2010). The Family League of Baltimore City's focus is primarily on acquiring funding for programs, contract management, and performance monitoring (Bodilly et al., 2010). The After School Institute supports accountability efforts by addressing quality improvement through training, technical assistance, and networking (Bodilly et al., 2010). Each partner assures accountability by assessing the degree to which the Baltimore's After School Strategy is meeting its goals sustaining its efforts. The organizations have been able to measure these efforts by building a system to collect enrollment and attendance data and by outsourcing evaluations of the program's effectiveness, quality, and outcomes.

Early in the building process Baltimore's After-school Strategy developed quality standards that dictate the physical environment and safety of the programs and the level of staff

and student engagement in program activities. Using the After School Observation Instrument, the Family League of Baltimore City conducts performance observations of each program site (Bodilly et al., 2010). From these observations, a technical assistance plan is developed to improve each individual program site. To help with the implementation of the assistance plan, programs are also provided with a representative for assistance. Continuously underperforming program sites may lose funding for the next year. Another requirement implemented by the Family League is that all program sites track program attendance and demographics into the After School Strategy's web-based Efforts to Outcomes program (Bodilly, S., Beckett, M., J., 2005). This data helps gauge the degree to which the programs are meeting requirements and reaching outcomes. (Bodilly, S., Beckett, M., J., 2005).

Baltimore's After School Strategy uses contractors to assess the strategy's effectiveness, quality, and outcomes of the after-school programs. Some of the research and evaluations include a data system with surveys for youth, staff, and site managers (Bodilly et al., 2010). In 2002, Dr. Eric Bruns conducted the first systematic match of program participants with Baltimore City Public Schools System's attendance and performance data. And in 2005, Baltimore's After School Strategy received funding to assess and enhance the training and technical assistance of program staff (Bodilly et al., 2010).

Similar to Baltimore's After School Strategy, After School Matters (ASM) in Chicago was committed to improving the effectiveness of after-school programs in the city. ASM increased the effectiveness of the programs it manages by conducting research and evaluation, collecting student data, and using program standards (Goerge, R., Cusick, G., Wassweman, M., Gladden, R., 2007). Through a partnership with The Chapin Hall Center for Children at The University of Chicago, ASM has collected extensive data on student outcomes based on program

participation (Goerge et al., 2007). The data collected has shown positive outcomes for youth that participate in programs, including high attendance rates, fewer course failures, and higher graduation rates. With a partnership with the Chicago Public Schools, a system of data collection was developed to improve the accountability of after-school programs in the ASM program system. The first system tracks program participants in Chicago to assess the utilization of after-school programs. The second method is an annual survey and interview that identifies what youth; both participants and non-program participants do with their out-of school time (Goerge et al., 2007). With this data ASM identify gaps in after-school services by identifying where services are offered and where youth go after-school. This gives Chicago's After-school Matters programs a greater understanding of youth participation and preferences of parents, which in turn allows ASM to develop more preferred services for the youth they serve. ASM follows the quality standards developed by the Chicago Public Schools for working with children to help ensure high performing programs (Goerge et al., 2007).

The third and final program with accountability efforts is New York's The After-School Corporation (TASC). The After-School Corporation has set the bar for after-school programs in New York by implementing an assessment tool to monitor program quality and performance, setting attendance requirements, and evaluating the impact of programs. TASC evaluates programs in nine areas using the New State Afterschool Network self-assessment tool (Reisner, E., 2004). The tool evaluates the environment to ensure safety for all; program administration and finance; relationship building between staff, youth, schools, and families; professional development for staff; activities offered; linkages to school-day learning; youth engagement; community partnerships; and the program's plan for sustainability and growth (Reisner, E., 2004). This tool is adapted by the New York State Department of Education to gauge the quality

of all after-school programs that it supports and similar tools have been adapted in Georgia, Nebraska, and North Carolina (Reisner, E., 2004). One of the requirements for after-school programs in TASC is that all sites maintain an average daily attendance for funding. All elementary sites must maintain 70 percent, 60 percent for middle school, and 50 percent for all high school sites. Program sites that do not meet these daily attendance requirements will have their funding reduced the following semester (Reisner, E., 2004). Daily attendance requirements such as the ones implemented by TASC give the programs responsibility over daily attendance and encourage sites to develop programs that interest parents and youth (Reisner, E., 2004). The After-School Corporation hires an outside firm and has an internal division to monitor the impact of its programs and evaluate services.

Discussion and Recommendations

While after-school programs are a viable option for reducing youth violence, barriers exist that limit access to these programs. A review of the literature shows that over eleven million children are without supervision between the hours of 3 and 6 PM (O'Donnell, P. & Ford, J., 2013). The major reason for this is that limited funding goes into after-school programs. Currently, there is only one federally-funded program designated specifically for after-school programs. Over the last decade, the federal investment for after-school programs has remained virtually the same, only growing from \$1.13 billion to \$1.15 over the last five years (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). While using social-cognitive theory to address individual and relationships factors that contribute to youth violence is important, that only addresses a portion of the issue. The upstream environmental factors have to be addressed as well- in particular policies that shape the communities in which youth live. After the literature review, it is understood that there is a need to reduce youth violence and after-school programs are a viable option. This paper identifies two recommendations 1) implementing policy interventions and 2) state-run after-school systems.

The first recommendation is that the federal government implement a policy that increases the federal funding for universal after-school programs based on family income status. The literature shows that steady funding is necessary in order for after-school programs to be sustainable for the long term. Currently, the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to after-school programs is 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The federal government needs to allocate more funding to after-school programs. Through the Affordable Care Act the nation's first mandatory funding stream was established to improve our nation's health insurance and public health efforts, so the Prevention and Public Health Fund is one potential source from

which funds could be pulled. The Prevention and Public Health Fund was created to provide a stable and increased investment in prevention, wellness, and public health activities. Because violence is a public health problem, this is the perfect initiative to fund nationally supported after-school programs. Since publicly-funded programs will not be sustainable for long, private sector funding will be needed as well. Incentives such as increased tax breaks should be offered to private businesses that fund after-school programs. After-school programs that receive these funds should also have to match each dollar that they received by at least three dollars. The literature shows that youth violence impacts youth regardless of race, class, or geographic location so it is important that all youth have access to a proven method to reduce exposure. Implementing universal after-school programs would show the federal government's commit to reducing youth violence and improving public health. By increasing the funding the federal government is also displaying the commitment to making after-school programs a sustainable method over time.

Other funding sources for after-school programs exist, such as private funding. After-school programs can receive grants and donations from private sources like local businesses, civic organizations, foundations, faith-based organizations, and associations. The best strategy for pursuing private funding is to frame the outcomes of the program with values that might resonate with the funder and match the interest of that group. For example, a local restaurant might be interested in funding an after-school program that emphasizes outcomes in the development of culinary skills.

To make the fiscal case for additional funding, the current expenses that youth violence costs the United States should be highlighted. As of today, youth violence costs over \$17.5 billion in medical care and out-of-work time (CDC, 2014). Because after-school programs have

been proven to reduce youth violence, increasing the funding for after-school programs could potentially reduce annual unwanted expenditures and save the government money in this particular area. Meeting Fully funding all after-school programs could act as a double-edge sword, greatly reducing debts related to youth violence and giving all youth the opportunity to develop in a healthy, safe, learning environment.

If this policy is going to be passed, legislators must be convinced that there is a problem. John Kingdon talks about the use of the language of “problems” and “conditions” to gain attention of those in power (Kingdon, 1995). “Conditions come to be defined as problems, and have a better chance of rising on the agenda, when we come to believe that we should do something to change them” (Kingdon, 1995). This shift in language can be achieved through media coverage of youth violence, expert testimony at hearings, and holding study groups. Awareness will be necessary to get the proposal on the national agenda. Last weekend in the city of Chicago, 32 people were shot and 6 died from related injuries (Chicago Tribune, 2015). Of those that died, three were teenagers and one was a 13-month old toddler (Chicago Tribune, 2015). In other recent news, Los Angeles experienced the first increase in crime in decades (Los Angeles Times, 2015). Experts believe that gang violence is a possible factor for the increase, even with the \$5.5 million the city put into the gang reduction program (Los Angeles Times, 2015). News framed in the language of public health would be a popular platform to bring attention to youth violence and put on the national agenda. Cobb and Elder suggest ways that issues can be created, including “issues can be generated by persons or groups who have no positions or resources to gain themselves” (Cobb & Elder, p. 129). Often, people want to do what is best for children and are likely to support causes that address children’s lives. In order to raise awareness, campaigns need to be designed to include testimonials of people who were positively

affected by after-school programs. Specifically, testimonials and campaigns featuring adults that participated in afterschool programs that highlighting the benefits and significance of afterschool programs in their lives.

Next, an alliance headed by leading organizations needs to be formed. . In order to get this passed there has to be a collective effort with stakeholders involved. The government, parents, after-school organizations, and community-based organizations need to join forces to affect policy change. When the multidisciplinary approach is used, groups are allowed to draw from a broad range of resources and expertise (Gustat et al., 2013 pg. S59). These groups have the potential to improve community health by examining the connections and skills of diverse members (Gustat et al., 2013 p. S59). It would be beneficial for there to be a leading, diverse group of stakeholders from across the nation. This diverse group should include parents, school officials, youth violence experts, public health professional, after-school program experts, law enforcement, and local political leaders. This type of alliance will take individual work that single organizations are doing and put together the most effective ideas and strategies for the best possible results. The Afterschool Alliance, which is an organization with the mission of “ensuring access to affordable, quality after-school programs” would be the ideal leader of this coalition. This organization is already the leading national advocacy group for after-school programs and has developed key relationships with the executive branch, the U.S. Congress, governors, mayors, and other advocates across the country. Other members of the stakeholders group should include groups like SHAPE America (Society of Health and Physical Educators}, American Camp Association, American Heart Association, National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, and Save the Children. This is a variety of organizations for different backgrounds but all have stake in the advancement in after-school programs.

Incrementalism is a theory in public policy making first developed in the 1950s by Charles Lindbolm in response to the conception of policy making as a process of rational decision making (Jones, B. and Baumgartner, 2004). Lindbolm's theory is that policy results from a process of collaboration and mutual revision among a group of advocates with different values, interests, and different information that results in marginal adjustment from previous policy (Jones, B. and Baumgartner, 2004). Trying to pass a policy for increased funding in the national budget will be an extremely difficult process. This is why policy officials have to be extremely delicate with the process and need to always be alert to any window of opportunity for incremental implementation. Small policy changes are the norm (Craig, R., Felix, H., Walker, J., & Phillips, M., 2010), and reasons for these small changes could be lack of education on the topics, limited time and focus on certain areas by legislators, and different sets of priorities. Therefore, policymakers and youth violence advocates should not be discouraged if their efforts take time.

The next recommendation of state-run after-school systems is important to ensure that after-school programs are successfully implemented into communities. Research proves that effective and high quality after-school programs had used the after-school system model. Just as the previously discussed, state-based after-school systems include all groups that have a stake in the quality of after-school programs, a national after-school system should develop the whole child and prevent exposure to violence through a holistic approach. The after-school system should enlist help from the United States Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Administration for Children and Families and the Cure Violence team. With these intermediaries, the government will be able to build a strong, versatile system that will be

responsive to the needs of youth they will serve in the United States. This group will be able to establish a sustainable program that will build the holistic child. These experts are essential to the system because it is important to understand the ways that health disparities impact children, which issues in education that need to be addressed, youth physical activity needs, unique approaches to dealing with youth mental health issues, and methods to reducing exposure to violence. In addition to the knowledge available on these topics, this core group of organizations offers needed expertise and technical skills in generating grant funds, strategic planning, research, program evaluations, and program quality improvement. The development of a national after-school system ensures that programs are comprised of multifaceted, research on proven methods to develop the whole child.

After-school systems have already been proven efficient in several states, and the success of those programs further prove the viability of this option. This method has been used successfully in Baltimore, Chicago, and New York. Under Baltimore's After-school Strategy, three associations have cooperated to fabricate a foundation to bolster the extension and revision of after-school programming in the city. Every one of the organizations within the association had to take the lead in the area of work that best fit the mission and objectives of the framework. The Safe and Sound Campaign drives promotion, technique improvement, and assessment endeavors. The Family League of Baltimore City center is fundamentally concerned with procuring financing for projects, contract administration, and execution observing. The After School Institute's endeavors toward quality improvement were bolstered by collaborative preparation, specialized help, and systems administration. Every accomplice guaranteed responsibility by surveying the degree to which the Baltimore's After School System was meeting its objectives.

After School Matters (ASM) in Chicago was focused on enhancing the viability of after-school programs in the city. Through an association with The Chapin Hall Center for Children at The University of Chicago, ASM has gathered broad information on understudy results in light of project interest. The information gathered has indicated positive results for youth who take an interest in projects, including high participation rates, less course disappointments, and higher graduation rates. In association with the Chicago Public Schools, information was gathered to enhance the responsibility of after-school programs in the ASM program framework. This collaboration gives Chicago's After School Matters programs a more comprehensive idea of youth support, which allows ASM to develop more holistic programming for the youth they serve.

New York's The After-School Corporation has set the bar for after-school programs in New York by actualizing an appraisal instrument to screen program quality and execution, setting participation necessities, and assessing effect of projects. TASC assesses programs in nine regions utilizing the New State Afterschool Network self-evaluation instrument. The instrument assesses the security of the programs' environments; project organization and money; relationship building between staff, youth, schools, and families; proficient advancement for staff; exercise programs; linkages to in-school learning; youth engagement; group associations; and the project's arrangement for manageability and development. These provide a blueprint for other states to follow in order to implement after-school systems.

In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the after-school programs, additional research should be done on a larger scale to examine whether after-school programs are making a difference on youth violence. While it is easy to examine the effectiveness of one individual program, a more expansive evaluation is necessary to determine the overall impact of reducing

youth violence. All available data would need to be examined to determine the impact of after-school programs.

Conclusion

Youth violence is a significant public health problem that impacts the entire community: adults, businesses, and community connectedness. All young people regardless of the community they live in are impacted by violence whether they are perpetrators, victims, or witnesses. This capstone records the search for a sustainable intervention to address youth violence. It is comprised of a review of current and relevant literature, and an assessment of popular theories of youth violence prevention.

Based on the research findings, it was determined that there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to reduce youth violence. The survey of the literature did not provide clear-cut after-school programs that could specifically impact the exposure of youth to violence. However, after-school programs that emphasize social-cognitive theory were studied and recommended for implementation. Social-cognitive theory suggests that teaching children how to read behavioral cues, improving their conflict-resolution skills, and improving their ability to react more positively to situations can prevent youth violence. Several after-school programs, after-school systems, and interventions that focused on developing social and cognitive behaviors were found, and key information was pulled from these resources. The information and suggestions can be applied to youth violence.

The literature also revealed that in order to effectively prevent youth violence, societal factors need to be addressed. Specific societal factors examined were access and policies that impacted after-school programs. This paper identifies two recommendations to address the societal factors: 1) implementing policy interventions and 2) state-run after-school systems.

These recommendations will make after-school programs more available to all youth in the United States and reduce youth violence. Reducing youth violence is well worth the investment, and may even decrease healthcare expenses in the long run. Therefore, this capstone and policy brief has been developed to inform policymakers and the general public of the specific benefits of after-school programs, in hopes that policy change will reflect the demands of an informed public.

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