

Enhancing Empowerment and Leadership Among Homeless Youth in Agency and Community Settings: A Grounded Theory Approach

Kristin M. Ferguson · Min Ah Kim · Stacy McCoy

Published online: 30 September 2010
© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2010

Abstract The purpose of this qualitative study with homeless youth (ages 18–24) was to understand their involvement in decision-making within agency and community settings. Three focus groups with eight, six and six homeless youth were conducted at an urban drop-in center and shelter from June to August 2008. Emergent themes include youth voice and ownership in agency and community programming, emotional safety, power and reciprocal support. Grounded theory is used to interpret findings and develop working hypotheses to guide future studies on empowering homeless youth to assume greater leadership involvement in their own lives, in social service agencies and in their surrounding communities.

Keywords Homeless youth · Leadership · Empowerment · Qualitative research · Grounded theory

The involvement of homeless youth in agency decision-making has received little attention in the extant literature (Bridgman 2001; Karabanow and Clement 2004). The relationships that homeless youth form with service providers within drop-in centers, shelters and transitional living programs are often the first positive experiences these youth encounter with adult role models. For homeless youth in residential settings, programs provide support and opportunities for the youth to

K. M. Ferguson (✉) · M. A. Kim · S. McCoy
School of Social Work, University of Southern California, 669 West 34th Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0411, USA
e-mail: kmfergus@usc.edu

M. A. Kim
e-mail: minahkim@usc.edu

S. McCoy
e-mail: stacy.w.mccoy@gmail.com

learn new skills, build their self-esteem and enhance their surrounding sense of community, or the social networks and relationships that are built by the youth in the agency setting (Park 2004). These social networks and relationships are vital in the youths' lives to build positive self-efficacy and to help them in their transition to adulthood (Whitbeck 2009).

Through participation in agency decision-making, homeless youth also have a voice in the programs designed to assist them. Prior studies acknowledge their limited input in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs that exist to help them improve their lives (Bridgman 2001). By sharing their point of view and shaping the agencies working with them, homeless youth develop leadership skills that can facilitate their self-sufficiency (Smith 2008).

Additionally, homeless youth benefit from social support in working with peers to improve agency programs. Social support is a critical factor on which many homeless youth rely to meet their needs, particularly those youth who do not frequently use agency services (Kipke et al. 1997; Unger et al. 1998). Social support is useful in helping them survive on the streets and endure daily stressors. Extant evidence suggests that involvement in a supportive peer group positively influences the mental health and pro-social behaviors of homeless youth (Bao et al. 2000; Unger et al. 1998).

The buffer theory of social support is useful for explaining the mechanisms by which social support is effective in enhancing coping strategies and promoting pro-social behaviors among homeless youth. This theory posits that social support serves as a mediating factor between psychosocial adversity and episodes of mental or physical illness (Alloway and Bebbington 1987; Cohen and Wills 1985). Wills (1991) refers to this phenomenon as the functional support perspective, in which involvement in supportive networks provides coping resources, which can be used in stressful situations, thus increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes. In the case of homeless youth, efforts to involve them in decision-making in agency and community programs can likely enhance their reciprocal networks with other youth, staff and community residents. These relationships can, in turn, help promote positive outcomes among homeless youth, such as increased formal employment, financial independence, self-sufficiency, independent decision-making, and mental health and residential stability (Whitbeck 2009).

In light of the lack of attention to homeless youths' voice in agency programming, this study used qualitative methods to explore the youths' actual and desired involvement in decision-making processes within the host agency and surrounding community. The study aimed to conceptualize both how homeless youth view their leadership opportunities and potential as well as how agency processes encourage greater involvement among homeless youth in agency and community settings. The two research questions guiding our study were: (1) *How do homeless youth exercise leadership and decision-making in agency and community settings*; and (2) *What agency processes encourage the empowerment of homeless youth in agency and community settings*? We draw from grounded theory methods by using qualitative data to derive conceptual categories related to empowerment and leadership among homeless youth (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Subsequently, we formulate working hypotheses to inform future research and practice to enhance empowerment and leadership opportunities for homeless youth.

Methods

Philosophical Base of Study

Our study has its theoretical underpinnings in social constructionism, or the study of the everyday “life world” of participants and their definitions and interpretations of this reality. Social constructionism theory posits that there is no one single reality, but many possible ways to understand and interpret behaviors and interactions (Rodwell 1998). This strand of constructivism also emphasizes an interactional view of human behavior, which assumes that individuals are intricately connected to their social environments and that relational, social and psychological factors are interrelated (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Witkin 1999). Recognizing the influence of the social environment and of interpersonal interactions, we elected to use focus groups to obtain in-depth knowledge about the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of homeless young people with respect to agency and community leadership opportunities (Linhorst 2002).

Project Setting and Sampling Procedures

From June to August 2008, the principal investigator (PI) conducted three focus-group interviews (one per month) with homeless youth (ages 18–24) at an urban drop-in center/shelter. The host agency consisted of a multi-service, non-profit organization that offers homeless, runaway, and at-risk youth a comprehensive system of care including street outreach, short- and long-term shelters, health care, mental health counseling, spiritual ministry, educational and employment services, and basic subsistence items. The PI has been collaborating with the agency since 2003, as the organization was involved in three additional multi-city studies on innovative programs serving street youth in three cities, migration and transience patterns among homeless youth in four cities, and trauma coping strategies among homeless youth in three cities. Human subjects’ approval for the current study was granted from the PI’s university.

Convenience sampling was used to select information-rich cases for in-depth study of the youths’ perceptions of and involvement in leadership opportunities. Recruitment took place on three occasions over 3 months on the weekday evening during which the focus group was scheduled at the host agency. The PI and collaborating staff member approached potential youth participants within the agency to introduce the study and solicit participation. Inclusion criteria for study participation were: (1) being 18–24 years of age; (2) having spent at least 2 weeks away from home in the month before the interview; and (3) providing verbal informed consent. Young people were excluded if they were incapable of comprehending the consent form. An eligibility screening form was used to determine the participants’ ages and length of time away from home.

We adopted a heterogeneous sampling procedure in which we selected youth from three residential programs in the agency (Patton 1990, 2002). Emergency Overnight (EO) serves youth who have been at the agency from 0 to 30 days; Crisis Shelter (CS) serves youth who have been at the agency between 1 week and 1 year;

and Rites of Passage (ROP) serves youth who have been at the agency between 6 months and up to 6 years. The overall pool of eligible clients from EO was 10, from CS was 48 and from ROP was 24 (Clinical Director, personal communication, May 3, 2010). By focusing on youth from distinct service levels, we were ensuring a broader range of perspectives about their street histories and agency involvement.

Data Collection

Following constructivist assumptions, data were collected and analyzed inductively using grounded theory, since we recognized our limitations in fully knowing beforehand the multiple realities that would emerge from the participants' discussions (Rodwell 1998). In generating grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasize that data should be concurrently collected, coded and analyzed. Because three focus groups were conducted over 3 months, this sampling method proved useful for us to refine and reshape the categories identified in earlier discussions by collecting additional input from the youth in subsequent discussions.

To create the focus group questions, the PI had developed *hunches* from previous research and practice with homeless youth, from the literature on youth empowerment and leadership, as well as from the *Youth Development Philosophy*, written by the agency's associate executive director. The interview questions (see [Appendix A](#)) were shared with the agency staff for review and input in an iterative review process. The PI's prior knowledge of and research with this population facilitated the development of several preconceived ideas—or suspicions—about key concepts and how they may be related (Rodwell 1998). As such, the PI functioned as a *human instrument* to shape the questions for the present inquiry.

The PI and one agency staff facilitated the three focus-group discussions. The first was held with eight youth from the Crisis Shelter (CS), the second with six youth from Rites of Passage (ROP), and the third with six youth from Emergency Overnight (EO). The group discussions lasted 2 h, were audiotaped and were held within the host agency. Youth received a \$10.00 gift card for their participation. Confidentiality was discussed prior to each interview to ensure that all information shared during the group sessions remained within the group.

Following each focus group, the PI and staff co-facilitator held debriefing sessions, from which themes in the data began to emerge. The PI documented the emergent themes from the three debriefing sessions and integrated the field notes into the data analysis. Two social work graduate students were hired and trained by the PI to help with the data transcription, coding and analysis. Weekly supervision meetings were held among the PI and research assistants to discuss emerging themes within the data. The PI also met periodically with agency staff (e.g., agency clinician and residential advisors) to share findings as the themes emerged. Again, the PI documented agency feedback in field notes that were incorporated into the data analysis. The constant feedback loop among researchers, staff and coders also enhanced the data's credibility and the descriptive and interpretative validity of the findings by allowing for continuous data processing (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Data Coding and Analysis

The constant comparative method was used to analyze participants' verbatim transcripts from the focus groups (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Data coding involved three phases. First, to generate initial, low-inference codes (i.e., open codes), the PI and research assistants identified key words from the interview guide, the participants' transcripts, and the agency's Youth Development Philosophy. We met weekly to refine codes, confer on additional codes and combine codes into a unified list. Next, we adopted a high-inference coding process (i.e., axial coding) in which similar codes were grouped into broader categories. Within each primary code, sub-categories were created by using codes from the original list and by breaking down complex codes into sub-categories. Weekly meetings facilitated the discussion of inferred themes within the data, which were also added to the revised list. Finally, we used memoing to elaborate on the categories and establish theoretical connections among codes (Lofland and Lofland 1995).

Multiple types of triangulation were used to maximize the data's trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Using investigator triangulation, we worked collaboratively in identifying codes, developing categories and memoing to describe the coded categories. Using data triangulation, different types of data were collected, including tape-recordings of group discussions, co-facilitator observer forms, field notes, and member checks with staff to provide feedback on the analysis (Anastas 2004; Denzin 1978). Theory triangulation was also used in the design of the interview questions. The lead researcher from social work, and agency staff from business, psychology and social work met periodically to devise the questions drawing from their respective disciplines and theoretical lenses (Janesick 1994).

Sample Description

Among the eight CS youth, four were African Americans (two males and two females), two were Hispanic males and two were Caucasian males. All six ROP youth were African Americans (three males and three females). Among the six EO youth, three were African Americans (two males and one female) and three were Hispanic (two males and one female). Our sample reflected the agency's general client demographics: 56% African American, 20% Latino, 15% Caucasian and 9% other; with 59% male, 38% female and 3% transgender.

Findings

Social constructionism provides a theoretical framework for understanding how homeless youth perceive leadership opportunities within the agency and surrounding community as well as how agency processes encourage the youths' increased involvement. The constant comparative method reveals four main emergent themes: (1) youth voice and ownership, (2) emotional safety, (3) power, and (4) reciprocal support. The complete coding template is displayed in Table 1. Each main theme and corresponding sub-themes is discussed below.

Table 1 Final coding template

1. Youth voice and ownership
1(a). Resident council as collective youth voice
1(b). Youth voice in agency programming
2. Emotional safety
2(a). Staff-client meetings for increased mutual understanding
2(b). Staff-client meetings for increased problem-solving
3. Power
3(a). Power to voice opinions
3(b). Access to agency administrators
3(c). Sense of community among youth and administrators
4. Reciprocal support
4(a). Youth as agency peer mentors
4(b). Youth as job resources
4(c). Youth as mentors of community homeless youth
4(d). Youth enhancing employable skills through community service

1. Youth Voice and Ownership

1(a). Resident Council as Collective Youth Voice

Youth were enthusiastic about forming a resident council in two of the three focus groups. The young people visualized the council as an elected body in which members, who would be elected by their peers, could make a unique and valuable contribution to the agency. The resident council would have a clear governance structure with rotating positions so that many youth have an opportunity to voice their input. The youth also stressed the importance of “self-rule” in planning activities; that is, youth would collectively select the outings and activities planned by the council and consult with staff. The council would function as a bridge between clients and staff, by providing the youth with increased access to staff and increased voice in agency programming and decision-making. Staff, in turn, would have more accurate information on the youths’ needs for improving existing programs and initiating new programs based on their identified needs.

Youth We could get a few people you know that’s been here for a little while and start like not so much a student government but like start a group you know because you’re saying like you want us to voice our opinions, you know you want new programs for us...

Youth Like a council advisor and then he can be like the guy that’s talking to like the staff or whatever I think that staff could advocate for him and like kind of tell him well you know you could do this like there’s no reason why you shouldn’t be able to do it, like you know so they won’t just cut you off and say oh can’t do it because you already have the other staff member. So it would be fair.

Youth The only thing that I gotta say is that the [agency] is meant for youth, but if it’s meant for youths then how come all the staff and adults is basically

running our program when we should be running our own program and deciding things for us. Basically it's called the youth [Agency] for homeless and we should be deciding our little programs.

In the Emergency Overnight group, youth expressed less support for a resident council since they were uncomfortable with select youth having more power than others. Youth were more distrustful and worried that such power or control could be abused by youth council members.

Youth It's gonna cause a.... It's gonna cause drama. I know it's gonna cause drama.

Youth Yeah I think it's gonna be drama. It'll be like a risk taking but it's kind—it sounds beneficial but it's too many different...

Youth Somebody's gonna wake up and be like...you're not the boss. Like I already know. I could see it.

Youth No, I would think that would cause controversy, actually 'cause see some people will get aside themselves and think because they have control over certain amount of things that it'll make them superior and people are mature but some people aren't that mature enough to not take advantage of their power. I think that would be bad—this whole setup where everyone gets a choice to sign up for, that's kind of independent and putting someone in charge of a certain amount of people that's kind of the same age range, it wouldn't feel right.

1(b). Youth Voice in Agency Programming

The youth noted that if they were to have increased voice in creating programs for themselves, they would have a more positive feeling of ownership in their programs. The youth indicated that many clients in the agency felt as if they were still living on the streets given their lack of voice. This feeling contributes to many youths' desire to rebel against structure, rules and authority. The youth recognized that they had left the streets and come to the agency by their own free will. As such, they stressed the importance of having the opportunity to provide input in agency programming that is designed to help them improve their lives. The youth underscored the importance of taking part in making a difference in their own lives. This collective involvement in improving their livelihoods would also strengthen their decision-making and problem-solving skills, thus contributing to increased motivation to participate in agency programs, as well as to proactively improve their lives.

Youth Yeah I just feel like well I think the most important thing is you know overall is that giving clients a voice and giving clients decision making powers. You know I feel like if clients are able to come together and make decisions and create you know create the program for themselves you know like pretty much not—I don't want to say change the program but if they could create things well to where you know it leaves them feeling positive. It leaves them feeling like—gives them a sense of...what's the word?

Youth Clarity?

- Youth No. Possessive—possessiveness? Like you know, this is my program, you know...
- Youth Ownership in the program. You know just give clients a voice and give clients you know 'cause I feel like you know a lot of clients feel like they feel just like they were on the street. They feel like they have no voice and they feel like you know they don't want to listen to authority so they're going to rebel and they're going to you know?
- Youth I'm trying to say that this [agency] is for us. It's for us to come and for us to come and get our stuff together as far as getting a job.
- Youth Only thing we come here is we want to change our lives and get ourselves together.
- Youth In placements and all that like group homes you on probation basically they send you there you know so you don't have no say so but we came here on our own free will so we should have an opportunity to say you know?
- Youth But doing it in a respectful way. You know like really just trying to sit down and learning how to be an adult. Okay look, this is where I'm coming from you know? This is all my family history. This is what I believe in as God or something like that. I would just like to be able to express that you know because this is where you know this is my values and this is what I believe in you know and I should be able to express that.

The youth collectively responded that they would likely be more involved in agency programs were staff to give them greater opportunity for input into the overall planning process. Youths' suggestions for how staff could better incorporate them into the planning process ranged from having staff poll the youth for suggestions for new programs to pilot testing new programs and seeking the youths' feedback before opening the programs to all agency youth.

- Youth It has to be programs that the members want.
- Youth During one of the night meetings you know you have night meetings, pass something, say answer this, and give 'em back to us—this little box to check. 'Cause people will answer questions when you ask them.
- Youth You should just have some like trial. You should just test it out like for a week or so to see the results you get then, then if it's good then you do it and if it's not you don't do it.
- Youth To strengthen them with like the things that we enjoy; pack them with things that we like, so maybe some hors d'oeuvres and some treats.
- Youth To motivate them.
- Youth Make it fun.

2. Emotional Safety

2(a). Staff–Client Meetings for Increased Mutual Understanding

The youth requested greater opportunities to sit down with agency staff and discuss their concerns. They noted that staff occasionally call joint meetings, but this seems

to happen only on a reactive basis, when something negative has occurred. The youth recommended that it is important to have these joint meetings in a more proactive and regular manner to prevent negative events and to allow the youth to express their feelings. They requested that staff openly ask the youth questions about information they want to know and similarly, that the youth could freely ask the staff questions they want to know to create greater mutual understanding. This open expression between youth and staff would also facilitate an emotionally safe environment within the agency.

Youth I think we should have more of those meetings to where we could sit down with the staff and discuss things and see what's going on with the [agency], discuss all the problems that are happening.

Youth Like where we all just get together and everybody can voice their opinion.

Youth It kind of make you feel important.

Youth And we get answers.... That's what it doesn't matter so like we actually get to know what's really going on because we have all the staff in front of us and you guys have all of us in front of you. If you have a question for us we'll answer that. If we have a question for you we will get like a better understanding of all of this.

2(b). Staff–Client Meetings for Increased Problem-Solving

The youth highlighted that more frequent staff-client meetings would allow them increased opportunity to collectively identify and solve agency problems. They expressed hope that agency problems would be more readily resolved through joint meetings. This partnership with staff around identifying and addressing agency problems would then increase trust and rapport between the staff and youth.

Youth A manager—stuff like that—a case manager and a manager is all sitting in there and like saying okay this is what we think and you know the person's like okay this is what I think. We need to come with like you know...

Youth A solution.

Youth Like have one day like all the staff and all the kids like get together about the program because if the clients and the staff are together, a lot more people are going to encourage what they feel and I think a lot more stuff going to change if you bring staff in altogether.

3. Power

3(a). Power to Voice Opinions

Various youth noted that staff never formally informed them that they could freely voice their opinions. The youth commented feeling a lack of power to voice their opinions or write a letter to staff in the event that they identify a problem in the agency. Other youth felt indifferent in voicing their opinions, noting that even if they were to speak up, nothing would officially change.

- Youth They didn't give us—oh how can I voice this, because they didn't let us know that we can voice our opinion. They made us feel like we can't get—if we see something wrong that we can't say anything about it and because they haven't let us know that okay we can voice our opinion and come together, write a letter or something like that, it's like they will not meet us at the bridge and they have not let us know.
- Youth I think what he's saying is that even if we do voice our opinions they never officially change anything on the books. See what I'm trying to say?

3(b). Access to Agency Administrators

Many youth indicated that they would feel uncomfortable approaching administrators with their concerns, given that such power was never formally bestowed upon them. The youth thus collectively requested that they be granted the power by administrators to talk to them about issues and problems they perceive in the agency.

- Youth I think that the most important thing that we talked about today is basically giving like clients more power and 'cause this is our place that we actually live you know what I mean and like we feel like we can't go up—just walk up to a manager and be like these are what's wrong you know what I mean? Like giving us that power and giving us that voice to be able to like bring it up to managers or the higher power where we feel powerless and like have like we feel like we have no choice you know?

Youth were further concerned that top administrative staff (e.g., the executive director) do not truly “know” them as individuals. The youth expressed greater interest with bringing their concerns to an agency administrator than to a program staff member, since the youth recognize that administrators have the power to make changes. However, the youth were concerned since they never actually get to interact with administrative staff. Youth perceived this as lack of time (or lack of willingness to take the time) by administrators to come talk to them about agency problems. The youth voiced frustration that many have been at the agency for years and still do not know administrators.

- Youth We could talk to [the executive director].
- Youth I just don't—I just want to know why he don't know us.
- Youth I want to know why they don't know us.
- Youth 'Cause I would feel better coming into a manager and telling this than to a staff.
- Youth You never see 'em.
- Youth They say they need to talk to us but they don't want to take the time...
- Youth It's just that like how he was saying they don't take the time out of the day. They have all these meetings upon each other but they don't take the time out of the day to talk to us to figure out how we feel about this problem but they so call concerned about this program and what to know what to do to

better this program, but they send you or like other mentor people to talk to us. Why are they—I don't understand why can't they talk to us for they self?

Youth Like being here for a long time it feels like I've been here for almost a year now and like I was a youth ambassador (i.e., honorary position for youth at agency), I'm doing things for this agency, trying to raise money for this program, but I have never been like welcomed by the head people who run this agency. Like I don't know them, don't know what they look like, and they don't know me.

3(c). Sense of Community Among Youth and Administrators

One benefit of leveling the power between administrators and youth would be an increased sense of community in the agency. The youth viewed the agency as a "small community" and considered that everyone should know everyone else. The youth suggested that upon arrival, the youth should be introduced to administrators so that they know who they are in case the youth had concerns that they wanted to discuss. Collectively, the youth stated that barriers to achieving this sense of community include the youths' transience at the shelter as well as the lack of introductions to agency administrators for the youth upon their arrival to the shelter. In addition to youths' desire to know the administrators (and to be known by them), youth desired to be understood, respected and treated as individuals by administrative staff.

Youth It's like almost like this small community. Everybody should know everybody.

Youth Like clients like over here some people come in and go you don't know how long their stay is going to be, but you still like when they come in you might not be here when they come in, but you still should like know them. You should know who they is just in case you have a problem you know who that person is and write 'em a letter or take it to them.

Youth I would like to say that staff needs to understand us and that's it...just understand us you know to ask us, and you know stop being stereotype and you know just ask us you know?

4. Reciprocal Support

4(a). Youth as Agency Peer Mentors

The youth proposed having a Peer Mentor Program in which they could counsel other youth in need. The youth saw this program as a way to bridge youth and staff by helping new youth feel comfortable in approaching staff and requesting services. Also, because many of the youth share common histories on the streets, they thought it was important to have a more stable peer (i.e., someone who has been at the agency for a while) to talk to about life issues. Some youth noted that they may have

avoided certain mistakes on the streets had they received advice from other street-involved youth. The youth also emphasized the importance of inviting former agency youth (i.e., alumni), who are now employed or in educational programs, to return to share their success stories with current clients. The youth noted that often they are better able to trust a peer than a staff member in disclosing the details of their past, since other peers likely have had similar experiences. Further, by serving each other, the youth would be “in check” with their own actions so as to be consistent in giving advice to others and in living their own lives with integrity.

Youth We should have like more of this like just like talking about stuff or talking about situations, talk about stuff that happened because I think that if I were to come here and somebody who’s been here for a while like telling me like what’s it like to be at [the agency]—stuff that they been through, it’s a whole bunch of stuff that I probably wouldn’t of—it’s a lot of stuff I wouldn’t of done. I think I would’ve took it way more serious ‘cause I talked to like another youth.

Youth I’ve done the good stuff and I’ve done like bad stuff also and I think that just us come together as peers talking to each other that would build us up versus having some staff just lecture us all day.

Youth Yeah. If we have—it’s like more peer meetings and just yeah, peer groups.

Youth You know like a guest speaker that came back and told us I was here, I made it, and this is why I made it.

Youth Like personally, it’s not case managers, it’s not the people, but it’s just what I’ve been through in the past.

Youth You don’t know who to trust.

Youth I talked to a peer because a client knows exactly what I go through; case managers don’t know so I rather go to him for some things than any case managers.

Youth I would go to a peer like him [points at another youth in the room]. I went to him. I talked to him about some stuff.

Youth It’ll also keep the like us—the mentors, it’ll keep us indirectly you know in check with ourselves and what we’re doing because you don’t want to be going to someone else telling him what to do when you ain’t right yourself.

4(b). Youth as Job Resources

The youth also suggested serving as job resources for each other. For instance, if the youth went to a job interview for a place that was hiring, they could obtain additional job applications to take them home to other youth at the agency.

Youth The good thing is since this is primarily about getting a job really. Some people who don’t have a job, go to—when you go to a job that’s hiring grab an application—an extra one and bring it to [the agency] and make copies like, stuff like that you know what I mean? Share the wealth you know so everybody can have a chance ‘cause I mean that’s a good way for us to take leadership responsibility without stepping on other people’s toes type of

thing. It really does help. It'll help everybody who's out trying to look for a job.

Youth Just things that make things better for everyone and not like one person picking on a group of people. Just one person being in charge of like getting application—going online and going to places that are hiring and printing out an application, like stuff like that.

Additionally, the youth could form job searching groups that support each other in looking for work. The group could make a list of places that are hiring to help those who are job searching. Similarly, the youth could build a job bank of available places that are hiring. For the youth who have already found a job, they could give tips to others who are still looking for work.

Youth Yeah, yeah just so like who makes a list of places hiring and then give the stuff to their group of if they're a leader for a certain team.

Youth Yeah but they should have—build a job bank.

Youth Maybe like where we get the job to help other people out. They don't know that they're hiring and give them a little hint of how they could get hired as well.

4(c). Youth as Mentors of Community Homeless Youth

In addition to enhancing reciprocal support within the agency, the youth also proposed having a Community Service Program, through which they would visit other shelters and serve clients. The youth collectively highlighted the importance of giving back to others who are “less fortunate” than themselves instead of only “asking for things.” Many of the youth interviewed have long histories of living on the streets. They acknowledged that there are still many other youth on the streets, who are in need of basic services and opportunities to improve their lives. Because the focus-group participants had chosen to leave the streets and enter a shelter program, they recognized that they have strengths and skills from which other street youth could benefit. The youth also noted that they feel empowered in sharing their life experiences with other youths in an effort to help deter them from making similar mistakes.

Youth I honestly would like to go to another homeless shelter and feed some kids. I would like to go to a like you know for Christmas. I would like to go help wrap some presents at a church you know?

Youth I basically like he said go around 'cause I know there's some shelters that like more—and they got shelters for kids, shelters for parents and kids, and we should go there...

Youth ...youth that are worse than we are.

Youth What we're saying is that to help us and help other people out too.

Youth Instead of taking charity we should give back as well.

4(d). Youth Enhancing Employable Skills Through Community Service

Other youth noted that these community service projects would help them build their resumes to enhance their job search. The youth described the arrangement as a “win–win” situation. As such, the youth could receive a certificate for their community service or use the recipient organization as a reference in their job search, whereas the host organization would receive the assistance with a project.

Youth Okay then give clients a way to strengthen their resume like the community service, like set up stuff like that. So we help out vendors who help out us and we all win like that.

Youth Well if you can get some kind of like certificate or something or maybe you want to be into like it'll help you with your job so you can put that on a resume or something like that like this place can be reference or something.

Discussion and Working Hypotheses for Future Research

Although we cannot generalize our findings, our goal was to create an accurate and detailed account of homeless youths' perceptions of agency and community leadership opportunities as well as how agencies can support the youths' increased involvement in decision-making and programming. From this rich description of youth perspectives, we draw relationship patterns among the four emergent categories and propose working hypotheses to guide future studies on empowerment and leadership among homeless youth.

1. Youth Voice and Ownership Working Hypotheses

Youth in two of the three focus groups (i.e., Crisis Shelter and Rites of Passage) expressed interest in forming a resident council to enhance their voices in agency programming, their access to staff and their ability to lead their peers in pro-social activities. In contrast, youth from Emergency Overnight were less supportive of a residential council that would bestow power upon a select group of peers. Given the EO youths' limited timeframe within the agency (0–30 days), it is likely that they were still accustomed to street life and not yet acclimated to the agency structure nor to the opportunity for youth involvement in programming. To protect themselves from violence and abuse on the streets, these youth frequently are mistrustful of others, instead reserving their friendships for a small group of similarly situated peers, often referred to as “street families” (Bender et al. 2007). Street youth also often report feeling misunderstood and negatively judged by society, which can further contribute to their mistrust of authority and limited service use (Ferguson and Xie 2008).

Related, extant research over 2 decades suggests that homeless youth experience histories of physical and sexual abuse, neglect and trauma (Tyler 2006; Tyler et al. 2001; Whitbeck 2009; Whitbeck et al. 1999). By the time these youth leave home, emotional and physical distress have likely occurred, and their ensuing street

experiences frequently exacerbate existing psychological symptoms or result in additional symptoms (Whitbeck 2009). Despite the youths' efforts to respond to such distress with early independence, many homeless youth continue to experience cycles of abuse and victimization on the streets and in subsequent relationships (Simons and Whitbeck 1991; Tyler et al. 2001). One consequence of repeated abuse experiences among these youth is an internalized belief that they are not respected or valued as individuals, which can contribute to their reticence in voicing their needs and opinions to agency professionals and other authority figures (Kidd 2003).

Empowerment-oriented group approaches are consistent with the social work tradition of strengthening clients' ability to use their voice to improve their lives and surrounding communities (Lee 2001). Such approaches have been used with homeless adult populations as a means to strengthen their peer relationships and create changes in the agencies that serve them (see Breton 1989; Cohen 1994a, b). In the case of homeless youth, it is likely that these youth bring unique perspectives to agencies, as both consumers of agency-based services and as links to the population of street youth who are not involved in services. As such, these youth serve as a valuable resource for practitioners in developing outreach and agency-based programs for this population. Likewise, the youth benefit from having increased voice, choice and responsibility in developing programs that better respond to the needs of this population. Being recognized and validated as an individual through voicing their opinions also promotes key developmental characteristics in homeless youth, including independent decision-making and self-sufficiency (Arnett 2004; Whitbeck 2009). In order for empowerment-group approaches to be successful, staff resistance to shifting power from personnel to youth must be identified and addressed. Similarly, staff's assumptions that homeless youth are overwhelmed with their own problems and thus cannot effectively lead must be challenged as well (Breton 1989).

Several working hypotheses emerge from the theme of youth voice and ownership. First, homeless youth involved in a resident council will have increased voice in agency programming and increased access to staff. Secondly, homeless youth who have increased voice in agency programming will demonstrate greater motivation to participate in agency programs and to improve their lives.

2. Emotional Safety Working Hypotheses

Across focus groups, the youth suggested having more regular staff-client meetings both to facilitate a deeper mutual understanding for staff of the youth and likewise, for youth of the staff. The youth perceived multiple barriers that inhibit feeling emotionally safe and openly voicing their opinions. For instance, the youth identified a fear of negative consequences for speaking out as one inhibitor to voicing their opinions to staff. Staff's formal and often rigid boundaries in interacting with the youth were also noted as a deterrent to the youth approaching staff to discuss either personal or agency problems. Finally, the youth perceived a lack of formal channels institutionalized within the agency through which they could voice their opinions to staff.

In the extant literature, homeless and street youth are frequently exposed to abuse and neglect in their families of origin, as well as victimization by adults or other peers once on the streets (Tyler 2006; Tyler et al. 2001; Whitbeck et al. 1999). Repeated abusive experiences can leave the youth vulnerable and distrustful of authority figures, even of those providers from social service agencies designed to assist homeless youth. Prior studies exploring homeless youths' willingness to trust others suggest that in not having trust modeled in their families of origin, many homeless youth become distrustful or have never learned to trust others (Kurtz et al. 2000). Homeless youth learn to trust others through supportive relationships with caring and consistent staff, who are personable with the youth rather than who maintain rigid staff-client boundaries. Safe agency spaces also provide a context for the youth to feel emotionally safe and to learn to trust others (Kurtz et al. 2000).

From a social capital perspective, feelings of trust and safety are associated with one's desire to actively participate in collective action within communities and institutions (Putnam 2000). In the case of homeless youth, learning to trust others and feeling safe in their environment are paramount in their societal reintegration process. Once these youth are able to trust other adults and to feel safe, they often turn to agency programs and services to improve their livelihoods (Kurtz et al. 2000). Based on these findings, it is hypothesized that regular staff-client meetings will contribute to greater mutual understanding among staff and youth. Also, when homeless youth feel emotionally protected and respected, it is hypothesized that they will be more likely to participate in agency processes to identify problems and work to address them.

3. Power Working Hypotheses

Youth across groups expressed a desire to have greater power to voice their input in programming, to see tangible changes in the agency as a result of their input, and to have the power to approach administrators. Leveling the hierarchical relationship between administrative staff and youth was also identified as a strategy for increasing the sense of community within the agency. At present, the youth reported experiencing powerlessness in approaching staff with their input as well as hopelessness that their voices would be heard and their suggestions would be incorporated into agency programs. Collectively, the youth noted that they would feel greater ownership in programs were administrators to afford them greater opportunities to provide feedback on improving existing—and planning new—programs.

The youth related these feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness in changing their surroundings to their lives on the streets prior to entering the agency shelter programs. These negative feelings, they attest, often contribute to their tendency to rebel against societal rules and authority figures and to avoid institutional services. De Rosa et al. (1999) confirm this finding in their study of service utilization patterns among homeless youth in Los Angeles. Among the barriers to appropriate and consistent use of services, youth identified their perceptions of restrictiveness of agency rules and concerns about confidentiality as reasons that they did not regularly use local homeless youth services.

Extant evidence suggests that client involvement in planning services can increase their satisfaction with services. Increased client satisfaction and involvement in service planning in turn have implications for both client retention and outcomes (James and Meezan 2002; Nelson and Allstetter Neufeldt 1996). If practitioners are receptive to sharing power with clients and involving them more integrally in service planning and delivery, clients may benefit from greater engagement and retention in services, as well as an increased likelihood of achieving their treatment goals. Given the relationship among client voice and sense of power, it is hypothesized that increased client voice in agency services and access to administrative staff will lead to greater involvement of homeless youth in agency services.

A corollary benefit of increased power among clients as expressed by the youth is an enhanced sense of community within the agency in which administrators and clients ideally would know each other and design client-informed programs that help homeless youth improve their lives. However, youth across the three groups voiced concern that top agency administrative personnel do not know the youth, nor do the youth have opportunities to interact with top administrators. The youth recognize the importance of having access to agency decision-makers, given their power to actually make changes within the agency. Youth anticipated that the agency would have a much stronger community feel in the event that youth and administrators had increased opportunities to interact.

As evidenced in the literature, group services within residential settings are common, as people living together frequently share common needs and benefit from mutual support (Berman-Rossi and Cohen 1989). Group activities with shared decision-making among homeless adults and administrative staff, such as Dinner Groups and Consumer Action Groups, promote increased feelings of community among client participants along with greater client involvement in agency programming (Berman-Rossi and Cohen 1989; Cohen 1994b). Drawing on these findings, it is also hypothesized that greater access to agency decision-makers and their power will lead to an increased sense of community within residential homeless youth programs.

4. Reciprocal Support Working Hypotheses

Youth in two of the three focus groups suggested that they be afforded greater opportunities to serve as peer mentors and job resources. Youth identified that peer mentors can help other youth who are service-disengaged to feel more comfortable in approaching staff for services. They also noted that youth who serve as mentors share many of the same home and street experiences as their peers, and thus can provide empathic responses to them. Various youth stated that they might have avoided problematic behavior on the streets had they had the opportunity to receive advice from an older peer who had lived similar experiences on the streets. Collectively, the youth identified that they were likely to trust more experienced peers who counsel them on avoiding similar life mistakes and on pursuing opportunities for their personal development. In particular, the youth suggested that former agency clients and more advanced levels of agency youth serve as mentors to

give the youth a positive role model—someone who has lived similar experiences but who has stabilized and progressed in accomplishing personal/career goals. Likewise, the youth noted that they could benefit from the knowledge and experiences of other employed homeless youth by participating in employment support groups that are facilitated by those young people who have already secured employment.

Prior studies indicate that peers play an important role in disseminating pro-social messages in prevention programs. Youth are likely to adhere to peer advice because they share similar experiences and life issues (Podschun 1993; Ramirez et al. 1996). In the case of homeless youth, research suggests that these youth develop high levels of trust among peers and rely upon each other as a source of positive emotional support (Bao et al. 2000). Conversely, homeless youth often experience a lack of trust with formal helping professionals (De Rosa et al. 1999; Kidd 2003; Tenner et al. 1998). Involving service-engaged youth directly as peer mentors, counselors and educators can also reduce staff-client distance, as these youth can serve as a bridge between their peers and staff.

Given the benefits of involving clients in service delivery, peer staffing in homeless youth programs has grown over the past decade (Barrow et al. 2007). The use of clients as paraprofessional staff is associated with increased knowledge of street and service systems among their peers, greater responsiveness to clients' identified needs, and greater empathy and rapport with individuals experiencing homelessness, all of which can enhance emotional safety in clients (Van Tosh et al. 1993). Based on the intersection between our findings and those from the literature, it is hypothesized that participating in peer-mentoring programs will contribute to greater engagement of homeless youth in formal agency services.

Across focus groups, the youth also highlighted a desire to give back to society through participation in community service programs, thus building reciprocal support in the process. In particular, the youth expressed interest in serving other street youth. Collectively, the youth expressed that they had considerable life experiences that could be shared with other young people currently on the streets. The youth suggested that having greater involvement in community service programs would also motivate them to stay off of the streets and to work towards finding a job and building a more stable life. They saw volunteer projects as a “win-win” situation that would not only benefit the community but also help the youth enhance their marketable skills. The youth were eager to strengthen their resumes as part of their plan to move permanently off the streets and become economically and socially self-sufficient. Providing aid to those less fortunate and strengthening their resumes were two youth-identified outcomes of participating in community service projects.

Review of the homeless youth literature suggests that the supportive networks these youth develop are necessary for survival, as they assist them in managing the stresses associated with living on the streets (Kipke et al. 1997; Unger et al. 1998). Other research reveals that these youth often develop deviant social networks to learn how to navigate the streets and survive (McCarthy et al. 2000). In each case, their social support largely emanates from peers, and the networks they develop serve important survival functions (Simons and Whitbeck 1991; Whitbeck 2009). Developing a positive social network that engages the surrounding community may

help the youth transition off the streets. Furthermore, providing extra support to current street youth by former street youth would give those on the streets exposure to positive social networks and motivate them to move off the streets. Drawing from this literature, it is hypothesized that increased participation in community service projects will lead to greater reciprocal support among homeless youth. Increased levels of reciprocal support will also be associated with greater motivation by the youth to utilize services and transition off the streets.

Limitations

The conclusions drawn from our findings should be taken with caution due to the study's exploratory nature and accompanying limitations. Given our use of a convenience sample in selecting focus-group participants, our findings may not be transferable to the greater homeless youth population (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Because the participants were likely more motivated to participate in a focus-group discussion, the sample was likely comprised of more engaged youth. Also, because the study participants were selected within a shelter, it is probable that street youth, who do not access agency services and who may have different perspectives, were not appropriately represented in this sample. Nonetheless, to ensure that we were targeting a range of perspectives among different levels of homeless youth (i.e., youth who were actively engaged in the street culture and youth in short- and long-term shelters) we conducted one focus group within each distinct agency program (i.e., EO, CS, and ROP).

Despite the limitations, this study suggests that homeless youth desire greater overall voice and involvement in agency and community settings. Offering increased opportunities to homeless youth for providing feedback on new and existing programs is one way that practitioners can enhance emotional safety, power and social support among this population. Greater ownership among homeless youth of the programs that serve them may also contribute to increased motivation to participate actively in agency programming and to improve their lives. Finally, increased involvement in agency decision-making (and access to agency decision-makers) may strengthen homeless youths' perceptions of the sense of community in residential and shelter programs. Future research is needed to test the proposed working hypotheses in an effort to provide homeless youth with greater voice and involvement in designing, implementing and evaluating programs designed to move them from the streets to self-sufficiency.

Acknowledgments Funding for this study was provided by the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation.

Appendix A: Focus Group Questions on Youth Leadership/Empowerment

1. What are some ways that we could build a stronger sense of community among young people at the agency? Aside from the typical events we celebrate here, what additional events would you like to see us celebrate at the agency?

2. How well do agency staff and the environment make you feel physically and emotionally respected and accepted? What do staff do that make you feel physically and emotionally respected and accepted? What could staff do to make you feel *more* physically and emotionally respected and accepted?
3. What problems do we currently have at the agency that need solutions? In your opinion, where should we prioritize our efforts in trying to strengthen the agency community and assist youth?
4. What makes you want to participate in a new program or activity at the agency? Are there things that make you not really want to participate in a new program or activity? What are some of these things?
5. What are the best ways to involve other youth clients in leadership activities at the agency? What are the best ways to involve youth clients in leadership activities in the surrounding community? What are some ways you have been able to make a contribution at the agency or in the community?
6. What skills would help you be more involved in leadership activities at the agency or in the community (for example, leadership, planning, decision-making, organizing, team-building, etc.)?
7. How open are staff to clients being involved in leadership positions at the agency? What do staff do to encourage clients to be leaders? How could staff better support clients to be leaders at the agency?
8. While at the agency, have you felt like you have had a voice in programs and activities? Can you give some examples? What are some ways that staff have included your voice in programs and activities?
9. What agency programs and activities would you like to be a part of strengthening? What suggestions do you have for how to strengthen these programs?

References

- Alloway, R., & Bebbington, P. (1987). The buffer theory of social support: A review of the literature. *Psychological Medicine*, *17*(1), 91–108.
- Anastas, J. W. (2004). Quality in qualitative evaluation: Issues and possible answers. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *14*(1), 57–65.
- Arnett, J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bao, W., Whitbeck, L. B., & Hoyt, D. R. (2000). Abuse, support, and depression among homeless and runaway adolescents. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *41*(4), 408–420.
- Barrow, S., McMullin, L., Tripp, J., & Tsemberis, S. (2007). Consumer integration and self-determination in homelessness research, policy, planning, and services. In D. Dennis, G. Locke, & J. Khadduri (Eds.), *Toward understanding homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research* (pp. 97–152). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Health and Human Service.
- Bender, K., Thompson, S. J., McManus, H., Lantry, J., & Flynn, P. M. (2007). Capacity for survival: Exploring strengths of homeless street youth. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *36*(1), 25–42.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. NY: Doubleday.

- Berman-Rossi, T., & Cohen, M. B. (1989). Group development and shared decision making with homeless mentally ill women. In J. A. B. Lee (Ed.), *Group work with the poor and oppressed* (pp. 63–78). New York: The Haworth Press.
- Breton, M. (1989). The need for mutual-aid groups in a drop-in for homeless women: The *Sistering* case. In J. A. B. Lee (Ed.), *Group work with the poor and oppressed* (pp. 47–61). New York: The Haworth Press.
- Bridgman, R. (2001). I Helped Build That: A demonstration employment training program for homeless youth in Toronto, Canada. *American Anthropologist*, 103(3), 779–795.
- Cohen, M. B. (1994a). Overcoming obstacles to forming empowerment groups: A consumer advisory board for homeless clients. *Social Work*, 39(6), 742–749.
- Cohen, M. B. (1994b). Who wants to chair the meeting? Group development and leadership patterns in a community action group of homeless people. *Social Work with Groups*, 17(1/2), 71–87.
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357.
- De Rosa, C. J., Montgomery, S. B., Kipke, M. D., Iverson, E., Ma, J. L., & Unger, J. B. (1999). Service utilization among homeless and runaway youth in Los Angeles, California: Rates and reasons. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 24(6), 449–458.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ferguson, K., & Xie, B. (2008). Feasibility study of the Social Enterprise Intervention with homeless youth. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 18(1), 5–19.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine Publishing Company.
- James, S., & Meezan, W. (2002). Refining the evaluation of treatment foster care. *Families in Society*, 83(3), 233–244.
- Janesick, V. J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry and meaning. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 209–219). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Karabanow, J., & Clement, P. (2004). Interventions with street youth: A commentary on the practice-based research literature. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention*, 4(1), 93–108.
- Kidd, S. A. (2003). Street youth: Coping and interventions. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 20(4), 235–261.
- Kipke, M. D., Unger, J. B., O'Connor, S., Palmer, R. F., & LaFrance, S. R. (1997). Street youth, their peer group affiliation and differences according to residential status, subsistence patterns, and use of services. *Adolescence*, 32(127), 655–669.
- Kurtz, P. D., Lindsey, E. W., Jarvis, S., & Nackerud, L. (2000). How runaway and homeless youth navigate troubled waters: The role of formal and informal helpers. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 17(5), 381–402.
- Lee, J. A. B. (2001). *The empowerment approach to social work practice*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Linhorst, D. M. (2002). A review of the use and potential of focus groups in social work research. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, 1(2), 208–228.
- Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analyzing social settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishers.
- McCarthy, B., Hagan, J., & Martin, M. J. (2002). In and out of harm's way: Violent victimization and the social capital of fictive street families. *Criminology*, 40(4), 831–865.
- Nelson, M. L., & Allstetter Neufeldt, S. (1996). Building on an empirical foundation: Strategies to enhance good practice. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74(6), 609–615.
- Park, N. (2004). The role of subjective well-being in positive youth development. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 25–39.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(3), 261–283.
- Podschun, G. D. (1993). Teen peer outreach-street work project: HIV prevention education for runaway and homeless youth. *Public Health Reports*, 108(2), 150–155.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- Ramirez, J., Nanji, D., Ginsburg, K., Cnaan, A., & Slap, G. (1996). AIDS prevention in inner-city Puerto Rican adolescents: The teens offer solutions. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 18*(2), 149–152.
- Rodwell, M. K. (1998). *Social work constructivist research*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Simons, R. L., & Whitbeck, L. B. (1991). Sexual abuse as a precursor to prostitution and victimization among adolescent and adult homeless women. *Journal of Family Issues, 12*(3), 361–379.
- Smith, H. (2008). Searching for kinship: The creation of street families among homeless youth. *American Behavioral Scientist, 51*(6), 756–771.
- Tenner, B. A., Trevithick, L. A., Wagner, V., & Burch, R. (1998). Seattle YouthCare's prevention, intervention, and education program: A model of care for HIV-positive, homeless, and at-risk youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 23*, 96–106.
- Tyler, K. A. (2006). A qualitative study of early family histories and transitions of homeless youth. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*(10), 1385–1393.
- Tyler, K. A., Hoyt, D. R., Whitbeck, L. B., & Cauce, A. M. (2001). The impact of childhood sexual abuse on later sexual victimization among runaway youth. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 11*(2), 151–176.
- Unger, J. B., Kipke, M. D., Simon, T. R., & Johnson, C. J. (1998). Stress, coping, and social support among homeless youth. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 13*(2), 134–157.
- Van Tosh, L., Finkle, M., Hartman, B., Lewis, C., Plumlee, L. A., & Susko, M. A. (1993). *Working for a change: Employment of consumers/survivors in the design and provision of services for persons who are homeless and mentally disabled*. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services.
- Whitbeck, L. B. (2009). *Mental health and emerging adulthood among homeless young people*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Whitbeck, L. B., Hoyt, D. R., & Yoder, K. A. (1999). A risk-amplification model of victimization and depressive symptoms among runaway and homeless adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 27*(2), 273–296.
- Wills, T. A. (1991). Social support and interpersonal relationships. In M. S. Clark (Ed.), *Prosocial Behavior. Review of Personality and Social Psychology* (pp. 265–289). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Witkin, S. (1999). Constructing our future. Editorial. *Social Work, 44*(1), 5–8.