

# School-based Positive Youth Development Promotion for Somali, Latino, and Hmong Youth

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## Collaborators

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## Background

- Minnesota has experienced dramatic increases in the diversity of its populations since 1990.
  - Largest Somali & 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Hmong population in the US
  - Exponential growth of Latino population
- Despite cultural assets, Somali, Latino, and Hmong youth are disproportionately affected by social determinants of health increasing their risk for tobacco and other substance use.

## Background

- Education-focused research is increasingly important in the health arena
- Educational outcomes are a key social determinant of health
- The Positive Youth Development (PYD) literature identifies multiple positive health outcomes resulting from youth connectedness to teachers and schools, including decreased substance use
- PYD and resiliency are closely related

## PYD promotion in schools

**Long Term Goal:** Use formative data from *key informant interviews*, teacher focus groups, and youth focus groups to inform the development of a school-based intervention to improve educator promotion of PYD. We anticipate this will reduce youth tobacco and other substance use.

**Today's Goal:** Describe the views of *key informants* working with Somali, Latino, and Hmong youth regarding how educators may promote PYD.

## Project description

- Community based participatory research study. Collaborators are the U of MN Program in Health Disparities Research and SoLaHmo Partnership for Health and Wellness.
- SoLaHmo's mission is to build upon the unique cultural strengths of Somali, Latino, and Hmong communities to promote health and wellness through research, education and policy.
- Community collaborative board advised work

## Methods

- We used purposeful methods to recruit 18 informants identified by the community-collaborative board as working successfully with Somali, Latino, and Hmong youth
- Sample included teachers, school youth-workers, and community youth-workers
- All participants completed a demographic survey and semi-structured interview
- Audio-tapes were transcribed and translated where necessary

## Methods

- Participatory approach to analysis
- Ethnic-community-specific research teams developed a coding structure which was combined across the teams. Each team coded transcripts.
- Teams came together and reviewed coding and identified major and minor themes.
- Descriptive survey analysis was conducted.

## Methods – Sample Questions

- Domain 1: Identify working definition of resiliency
  - How do you know a resilient youth when you see one?
- Domain 2: Identify what works generally to promote resiliency
  - What are the specific things that you do in your work with S/L/H youth to promote resiliency?
- Domain 3: Identification of teachers' role in promoting resiliency for S/L/H youth
  - What would a teacher who is successfully promoting resiliency for S/L/H youth be doing in the classroom?
- Domain 4: Identify the key components of a program to help teachers promote resiliency for S/L/H youth

## Results - Demographics

- 4 Somali, 4 Hmong, 10 Latino
- Ethnicity of respondents: 4 Somali, 4 Hmong, 7 Latino, 3 Caucasian
- Participants were largely female (approx 70%)
- 30% were teachers, 30% were school youth-workers, and 40% were community youth-workers

## Results - characteristics of resilient youth

- Adaptability, independence, goal/academic orientation
- Positive cultural (Latino, Hmong) and religious (Somali) identities
- Social contribution through family (Latino) and community (Hmong, Somali) involvement.
- *I think Latino youth from an early age take on adult roles and responsibilities and maybe that's why, that's what triggers that thinking out of the box.*

## Results - Barriers to resiliency

- Evolving cultural identities
- Family inexperience with expectations from schools
- Poverty
- *I think the major difference is that a lot of the Hmong youth, their issues come from identity--an identity crisis and communication with their parents.*
- *A lot of them [parents] think that the teachers are responsible for teaching so they don't have a role and that is how it used to be back in Somalia but now it has to be a team work.*

## Results - approaches to promoting resiliency

- Build trusting relationships
- Establish high expectations for achievement and behavior
- Convey respect including cultural (all) and religious (Somali) appreciation, and recognition of individual circumstances and background.
- *I think you have to take time to actually get to know the kids. It always helps if you can remember something about the kid that isn't just school related, and listen to them and care! Truly care.*

## Results - strategies to promote resiliency

- Included classroom approaches for:
  - Getting to know students
  - Promoting positive cultural identity
  - Helping youth feel a part of something
- Teacher barriers included attitudes, time & lack of training.
- *It's got to be a piece on just getting to know somebody. Like an ice breaker or something.*
- *She [curriculum director] and I worked on the Hmong curriculum. For the first time ever, we taught about the Hmong migration.*

## Summary of findings

- Identified teaching practices paralleled *Authoritative Parenting* practices (Steinberg L. 2001)
- Results suggest educators should:
  - Develop trusting relationships with students
  - Convey respect for students including for their cultural and religious backgrounds
  - Maintain high expectations for academic achievement and behavior
- Classroom management techniques and exercises to build relationships may be taught

## Next Steps –

- Findings will contribute to development of programming to increase student-educator connectedness and reduce tobacco and other substance use.
- Recently funded by NIH NIMHHD R24 to develop and pilot an intervention

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## Preliminary Results Teachers & Youth

- Teachers raised similar themes, but with diverse opinions regarding responsibility for connecting with students and more emphasis on system barriers (large class size)
- Youth raised similar themes
  - Relationship-building depended on respect. Showing favoritism or exhibiting discrimination undermined respect
  - Teachers conveyed they care by encouraging youth to achieve, teaching in an engaging manner, and addressing all students' questions