Michigan State University

Adolescent Diversion Project

Principal Contact

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SECTION 1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

1.1 ABSTRACT. Michigan State University's Adolescent Diversion Project (ADP) was founded in 1976 through a collaborative agreement between the NIMH's Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, the MSU Dept. of Psychology, and the Ingham County Juvenile Court. The ADP created an alternative to court processing for young offenders in Ingham County by offering innovative educational experiences, employing best practice interventions, and using sound scientific methodology to address the pressing social issue of juvenile delinquency. The ADP sought to use trained and supervised mentors (MSU students) and to scientifically examine the relative effects of various intervention models, the impact on University undergraduates, and the on the community.

Since 1976, 4,125 youth have been diverted from the local juvenile court. Similarly, 4,125 undergraduates have participated in a two-semester course where they received training in diversion work and carried out eight hours per week of structured mentoring. Through a series of longitudinal field experiments, the ADP has demonstrated that participating youth engaged in repeat offenses at half the rate of those randomly assigned to a control group, and attended school at significantly higher rates. The experience also significantly affected the MSU students' educational experience, attitudes, and future graduate school and career paths. The program had significant effects on juvenile court decision making as well. Over the past two decades, both MSU and the local community have committed ongoing resources to sustain the ADP.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE. What brought Michigan State University (MSU) and the Ingham County community together was the crisis in juvenile justice. It has been described as having three components. First, juvenile crime represented a threat to community safety and local government expenditures. For example, nationally it is estimated that more than two million juvenile delinquents are arrested each year. Second, in response to the crime rate, communities are expending increasingly scarce resources. Recent national estimates indicate that nearly $20 billion are spent supporting the multiple facets of the juvenile justice system. Third, most traditional attempts to reduce juvenile crime have been found ineffective. Only under rather specific conditions, described as "evidence based practice," is it reasonable to expect that interventions will result in reductions in crime.

SECTION 2. RELATIONSHIP AND RECIPROCITY BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY

Faced with the juvenile justice crisis, a group from MSU, the Ingham County Juvenile Court, and the Ingham County community began a collaboration which would become known as the MSU ADP.

The group was made up of faculty and graduate students from MSU, administrators and staff from the Ingham County Juvenile Court, and representatives of the Ingham County community. This group sought to design and validate an intervention model which would jointly engage the University and the community, provide an effective alternative intervention for juvenile delinquency, and provide a platform for long term sustainability of the partnership. This activity is congruent with MSU's mission statement, approved by the Board of Trustees on April 18, 2008: "…As a public, research-intensive, land-grant university funded in part by the state of Michigan, our mission is to advance knowledge and transform lives by…advancing outreach, engagement, and economic development activities that are innovative, research-driven, and lead to a better quality of life for individuals and communities, at home and around the world."

This partnership has gone through three distinct phases. In the demonstration/research phase, the partnership sought research funding to support the initiation of a model program which would draw on the joint resources of the community and the University. As a result three federal grants were written and funded to establish a model intervention program and to scientifically examine its efficacy.

During this phase, the University contributed faculty and student time, theoretical and intervention information, and research and methodological acumen. The community provided a setting, organizational support, referrals of juvenile offenders from the local juvenile court as an alternative to court processing (diversion), experiential expertise, and access to records. The key community partners were the chief Juvenile Court judge, the Court administrator, the Chief of Police, commissioners from the County Board, and probation officers from the Intake Division of the Juvenile Court. The judiciary, administrators, and commissioners served in an advisory capacity for project and intervention design. The probation officers provided referrals to the ADP and assisted with training students. The community received a new program for juvenile offenders, high quality information about its efficacy, and participation in a joint research venture. They had high expectations about the positive impact on their community, the opportunity to lower juvenile justice costs, and the opportunity to examine the efficacy of their practices with scientific rigor.

University partners included faculty and graduate students from the Psychology Department as well as the administrators who supported these efforts. They worked with the advisory group to design a model intervention based on best practice principles which would be implemented by undergraduate students. They also designed a manual that would be used to train the students. An R01 grant was written to the Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency of the National Institutes of Mental Health to support this initial phase. The grant supported the training and supervision of the students who worked one-on-one with juveniles referred by the Intake Division as an alternative to court processing (standard probation or residential treatment). Youth were randomly assigned to the ADP or Probation so that the long term impact of the intervention could be examined. The undergraduate students were involved in a new, two-semester course in which they received three hours of weekly training and supervision for their community work. They were trained and supervised in delivering a hybrid of child advocacy and cognitive behavioral interventions.

The grant also supported three research agendas: (1) examination of the processes and efficacy of the intervention model compared to placement on probation; (2) examination of the impact of the educational experience on the students involved; and (3) examination of the impact of the new alternative to the justice system on that system itself. Congruent with the three-pronged mission of MSU, the ADP sought to generate scientifically credible information about intervention efficacy, provide unique and expanded educational experiences for graduate and undergraduate students, and expand its outreach/engagement mission to an underserved area (juvenile justice).

Based on the positive results (described below in Sections 3.1 and 3.2) which the research/demonstration phase produced, the partners agree to move to the replication/refinement phase. Since some positive community impacts had been demonstrated (recidivism reduction, cost savings, court efficiency improvement) as well as positive university impacts (student education, grant received, and scholarly products), the advisory group agreed to move forward. “For the first time, we have sound evidence about the effects of what we’re doing” was the memorable quote from the senior juvenile court judge.

Since the outcomes were a pleasant surprise, to say the least, it was felt essential to determine the robustness of the results of the first phase. A second and third grant were applied for and funded (by the same agency) to examine the differential effects of varying intervention models and to examine the relative impact of using varying person/power groups as change agents. In the first of these two grants,

the intervention model in which the students were trained and supervised was systematically varied in a longitudinal experiment. The efficacy of three models (behavioral, relational, advocacy) and an attention placebo group (usual Big Brother/Big Sister training and supervision) were compared with each other and with a probation control group through random assignment. In the second study, MSU undergraduates, a local community college, and local volunteers were all used as change agents and their efficacy compared to normal probation. All groups received parallel training and supervision.

During the replication/refinement phase the roles of the partners remained the same. At the conclusion of the replication/refinement phase, several conclusions were clear. First, a 15-year partnership between MSU and the Ingham County community had been enduring and successful. Second, the jointly constructed and operated intervention model had significant effects on recidivism, court efficiency, and student education. Third, the specifics of the intervention model did not differentially impact recidivism but one was far superior in terms of student and youth satisfaction (the cognitive-behavioral advocacy model). Fourth, the intervention models, complete with intense training and supervision, were far superior to attention only. Fifth, the partnership was clearly worth continuing. The community and the University were both benefiting. As a result, the advisory group recommended that the University, Juvenile Court, and County Commission execute their long standing agreement to continue the ADP with local resources.

The operational phase of the partnership was initiated through a contract between MSU and Ingham County in the late 1980s. The agreement called for sharing ADP operation and funding on a continuing basis. The contract calls for MSU to provide a faculty supervisor during the academic year, one graduate student devoted to undergraduate student supervision and training year around, space, and clerical and technical support year around. The County provides the University funds for a full time project director and three additional graduate students to supervise and train the undergraduates. Additionally, partial support for faculty supervision during the summer months is provided by County funds. In short, the County pays the excess costs of training and supervising undergraduate students in a class of eight students and 12 month project operation. The County also agrees to devote intake worker and supervisor time to project operation. This partnership's genuineness is attested to by the joint time resources devoted to the project and the actual sharing of fiscal resources. Each partner benefits from the continued collaboration with the sharing of resources, staff, scientific knowledge, educational experiences, and effective intervention models.

SECTION 3. IMPACTS

3.1 IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY PARTNERS. There have been three impacts on the community partners. The first is that the ADP has resulted in a safer community. During the first two phases of the ADP, three experimental comparisons of the projects demonstrated that youth who participated in ADP had recidivism rates half that of a control group randomly assigned to usual treatment. In Figure 3.1a, it can be seen that two and a half years following program entry, youth involved in ADP were less likely to commit further crimes compared to those placed on probation or given nonspecific attention by a university student. ADP participants attended school at a 63% rate in a two year follow-up compared to a 26% rate in the control group. Similar recidivism results (Figure 3.1b) were produced when MSU students were compared with community college students, community volunteers, and probation. The ADP was continued in the operations phase with only MSU students because the community college and community volunteer change agents were much more expensive to recruit and supervise.

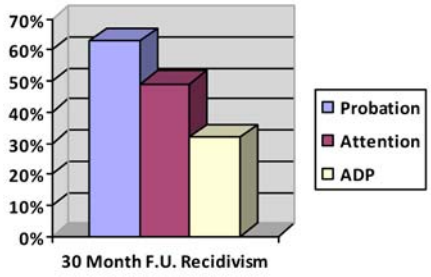

Figure 3.1a

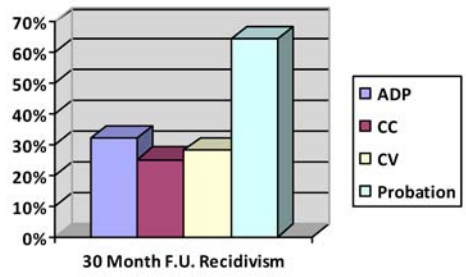

Figure 3.1b

The second impact was fiscal. For each youth referred to the ADP, there were direct savings (in 2009 dollars) of approximately $5,000. Over the course of the partnership, ADP has saved the local community over $20,000,000. In times of tight resources, this is a major accomplishment.

The third impact was systemic. Research conducted from 1977 through 1986 modeled court decision making and alternative disposition (sentencing) predictors before and after the initiation of the diversion project. This research demonstrated that the introduction of the diversion program allowed more efficient targeting of court resources.

3.2 IMPACTS ON UNIVERSITY PARTNERS. There were five sets of impacts on the University partner. First, the educational experiences of students were expanded. Through the ADP, a new series of courses (Psychology 371 and 372 – Community Projects) was developed and made a part of the curriculum.

More than four thousand (4,125) undergraduate students have been involved in the two course sequence since its inception. Further, the existence of this course sequence has now been used by two other faculty and spawned course experiences in violence against women and children in mental health treatment. Two longitudinal experiments were also conducted on the impact of the experience on undergraduate students. When students who participated in ADP were compared to a randomly assigned group of undergraduate students in a two year follow-up, the experience was found to have a favorable impact on student educational achievement (higher GPA), professional development (more likely to go to graduate school and enter human services), and attitudes (more positive towards youth). Additionally, 117 graduate students have received research/intervention training. Graduate students have also been impacted. Four of them replicated the work in other communities and 42 entered faculty positions with a continuing interest in outreach/engagement. The ADP initiated and routinized outreach/engagement experiences as part of our undergraduate and graduate curriculum.

Second, there have been substantial scholarly outputs. The result has been a book devoted solely to ADP development, 41articles in refereed scientific publications, and 27 presentations to professional meetings. Third, the ADP has brought national attention to MSU. It has received awards from Department of Justice (Law Enforcement Assistance Administration Exemplary Project Status), Division 13 of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Child Welfare Information Exchange of Department of Health and Human Services, APA's Task Force on Prevention, the National Association of County Governments, the Carnegie Foundation, and the United Nations Directory of Effective Parenting and Family Skills Programs.

Fourth, the ADP helped institutionalize the University's role in outreach and engagement by providing a generalizable model of community collaboration surrounding a key social issue which engaged the educational and scientific missions of the University. The ADP has truly demonstrated the University's unique capacity to accomplish its three-pronged agenda. Finally, the ADP has resulted in three R01 grants from NIMH totaling over $8,000,000 for the first two phases. During the third phase, the University has received nearly $3,000,000 to support its role in the continuation phase. Further, based on the intervention model developed in Phases 1 and 2, Prof. Davidson partnered with Prof. Cris Sullivan (Department of Psychology) and local violence against women shelters to receive additional NIMH R01 grants totaling over $4,000,000.

3.3 IMPACTS ON ENGAGEMENT SCHOLARSHIP

Abstract for *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*

Michigan State University's Adolescent Diversion ADP was founded in 1976 through a collaborative agreement with the community. The goals were to create a university/community collaboration through which innovative educational experiences would be offered, best practice interventions employed, and sound scientific methodology used to address the pressing social issue of juvenile delinquency. The ADP sought to create a more effective alternative to the juvenile justice system through the use of highly trained and supervised mentors (MSU undergraduate students); to scientifically examine the efficacy of this mentoring program, the relative efficacy of multiple intervention models, the impact of the experiential pedagogical model on University undergraduates, and the impact of the creation of the ADP on the local community; and, contingent upon success, to create a long term collaboration between MSU and the local community. Since 1976, 4,125 youth have been diverted from the local juvenile court with dramatic reductions in repeat offenses and 4,125 undergraduates have participated in a two semester course in which they received training in diversion work and carried out eight hours per week of in community structured mentoring. Through a series of longitudinal field experiments the ADP has demonstrated that youth who participated engaged in repeat offenses at half the rate of those youth randomly assigned to a control group; youth who participated attended school at significantly higher rate than those youth randomly assigned to a control group; the experience significantly affected the educational experience, attitudes, and future graduate school and career paths of those students involved compared to a randomly assigned group of students; and the creation of an alternative to the juvenile justice system had significant effects on juvenile court decision making. Over the past two decades, both MSU and the local community have committed ongoing financial resources to sustain the ADP.

SECTION 4. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

Lessons learned and best practice occurred at multiple levels. At the level of the Partnership, all parties had to learn new roles in order to allow the partnership to occur. The University faculty and students had to expand their roles to include actual involvement and presence in the community, participation in a peer rather than "expert-client" relationship, and, maybe most importantly, patience. These are unique role behaviors within a traditional faculty position. The community partners also had to en-

gage in new role behaviors, including making decisions based on scientifically sound best practice rather than experiential judgment, sharing resources with a previously "untrusted" academic institution, and allowing students to share in professional roles. They too had to learn patience with the "slow pace of science." Only with these ingredients was the partnership successful. Planfulness and perseverance in pursuing such innovative partnerships is essential since they will not be developed and maintained in a short time frame. At the level of the program model the lessons learned were many. The research outcomes clearly demonstrated the principles of best practice for intervention with juvenile offenders. The use of intense, time limited, one-on-one, model specific interventions can produce significant results on recidivism and school performance. Further, the use of proactive training *and* supervision of intervention activities is critical to producing robust results. Finally, interventions that proactively target important life domains of youth (namely, family, school, peers, and employment) are critical to producing prosocial outcomes.

At the level of innovation sustainability several principles also emerged. It is vital to include methods that will produce scientifically sound information about outcomes and cost. In today's fiscally tight world, a major asset in the struggle for continued funding is having unequivocal information. It is also important that sustainability and dissemination be planned as part of the ADP from the outset. Without this as a part of the initial plan, continuation after the end of the federal funding would have been much more difficult. Finally, it is critical to involve key stakeholders in the innovation plan from its inception. Because the ADP engaged key community stakeholders (judiciary, staff, community members, county commissioners) from the beginning, commitment to sustainability was facilitated.

SECTION 5. FUTURE AND ENDORSEMENTS

5.1. FUTURE OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT. This partnership has substantial plans for continuation. As described earlier, the specific partnership formed around the ADP has expanded into several other areas. Since the ADP is now part of both University and County budgets its continuation is relatively secure. It is expected that the ADP will continue to serve 125 diverted youth and their families per year, involve 125 undergraduate students enrolled in Psychology 371 and 372 each year, and train four graduate students each year. Joint planning and administration of the ADP will continue through a

partnership between MSU, the Ingham County Juvenile Court, and the Ingham County Board of Commissioners.

The partnership has also expanded to include an extensive systems assessment of ADP. Individual and contextual risk and strength data have been collected on all youth coming to the Ingham County Juvenile Court over the last five years. As of this writing, these data have been assembled on more than 4,000 youth and families. The purpose of this assessment is to better understand individual and contextual risk. Based on this analysis, implications for court decision making, resource allocation, and intervention design are being determined. A team with representatives of MSU, the Court, and the community has been developing a plan which will take advantage of these data for future policy decisions and intervention design. Presentations of these results to local crime prevention boards and the County Commission have already been made.

5.2. USE OF AWARD DOLLARS. Should the ADP partnership be fortunate enough to receive this award, the funds would be used to enlarge our efforts into the area of developing best practice interventions for sex offenders. These highly problematic offenders have been largely ignored in the evidence based practice arena. There is substantial interest in the MSU team and the local community in replicating our process to develop innovative and effective interventions for juvenile sex offenders. These funds would be used to support graduate students and court staff to collect relevant background information, develop an intervention model, and apply for research funds to develop a scientifically credible intervention.

5.3. ENDORSEMENTS. (1) Letter of support from MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon and (2) Letter of support from Ingham County Circuit Court.

SECTION 6. APPENDIX

Sturza, M. L., & Davidson, W. S. II. (2006). Issues facing the dissemination of prevention programs: Three decades of research on the Adolescent Diversion Project. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 32,* 5-24.

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

February 27, 2009

Selection Committee
C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award
NASULGC
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Selection Committee:

Foremost among our values at Michigan State University are quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity. It is a message that we have championed for more than 150 years, and it continues to resonate with our outstanding students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community.

Several years ago we assembled a faculty team that defined outreach at MSU as "a form of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research, and service. It involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions."

It is an honor to provide a letter of endorsement to the Selection Committee for the C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award nomination representing Michigan State University. The **Michigan State University Adolescent Diversion Project** is led by Dr. William S. Davidson II, University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Psychology, College of Social Science. This project represents an outstanding effort that demonstrates our university's commitment to collaborative, participatory, empowering, systemic, and transformative work anchored in scholarship.

The work conducted within the framework of the Adolescent Diversion Project fosters MSU's land-grant mission by connecting university knowledge with community knowledge in mutually beneficial ways.

When the project was founded in 1976 it represented a collaborative agreement between the National Institute of Mental Health's Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, the MSU Ecological Psychology graduate program, and the Ingham County Juvenile Court. The goals were to create innovative educational experiences, best practice interventions and sound scientific methodology to address the pressing social issue of juvenile delinquency.

The Adolescent Diversion Project was selected to represent MSU because of its long-running collaboration with university-community partners and the number

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of youth impacted by the project. For more than 25 years this work has combined university participants with key community partners, including the chief Juvenile Court judge, the Court Administrator, the Chief of Police, commissioners from the County Board, and probation officers from the Intake Division of the Juvenile Court. The impressive longevity of this project is a testament to the community's support for this exemplary work.

Even more remarkable, 4,125 youth have been diverted from the local juvenile court with dramatic reductions in repeat offenses (participants commit repeat offenses at half the rate of those in a control group), and similarly, 4,125 undergraduates have participated in educational experiences that affect their career paths and attitudes about the juvenile justice system. The project has had a direct impact on scholarship (one book and 41 articles published), the quality of which has been recognized with awards and supported through continuing federal grants. This project represents stellar engagement work that has positive impacts for the community, students, and scholarship. It demonstrates Michigan State University's land-grant mission, and continues our commitment to advance knowledge and transform lives.

I invite you to contemplate the breadth, depth, and impact of the work associated with Dr. Davidson's project. It is an honor to endorse this application for the 2009 C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lou Anna K. Simon, Ph.D.
President

Ingham County Circuit Court
30th Judicial Circuit

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February 18, 2009

Selection Committee
C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award
NASULGC
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Selection Committee:

It is indeed a pleasure to write a letter of endorsement for Michigan State University's Adolescent Diversion Project. We have had the pleasure of collaborating with MSU in this endeavor for over three decades. Together, we have built a model intervention program, conducted award winning research, constructed an intervention exemplifying best practice, produced results which have increased the safety of the community and improved the lives of young people, and saved the local community significant financial resources. As the application explains, the Ingham County Juvenile Court, in collaboration with the Community Advisory Board and the Ingham County Board of Commissioners collaborated to establish the project in 1976. This was originally facilitated by a research grant to Professor William S. Davidson II from the National Institute of Mental Health's, Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency. Our Court Judiciary, Administration, and Staff played a central role in the original design of the Project in concert with the Community Advisory Board and Michigan State University. We participated in the design of referral procedures, intervention models, student training, and supervision. Court staff were jointly involved in Project training.

During the research demonstration phase of the Project, we were very pleased to learn that long term follow-ups recidivism rates were reduced by half, school attendance was increased by more than 100%, Court System decisions were increased in effectiveness, and substantial fiscal savings occurred. More

specifically, using current dollars as the metric, each of the 4125 cases handled by the Diversion Project since 1976 has saved the local community over $5000. This is just the costs saved in Court processing and supervision. There are clearly substantial additional cost savings in terms of community safety.

At the inception of the Project, all collaborating parties agreed that upon completion of the research phase, and contingent upon positive results, we would continue our relationship to insure Project sustainability. We were fortunate that our collaboration resulted in three five year federal research grants. Following federal funding, our collaboration continued through sharing the costs of operation. Today, the Diversion Project continues under a joint agreement between the University and the County in which each provides significant resources. In the most recent year, we shared these costs nearly equally. The University contributes faculty time, graduate student time, space, clerical support, and supplies, A grant from the County to the University supports the additional costs of student training and intense supervision so critical to program success. In other words, this Project meets the most stringent test for collaboration, we SHARE actual money.

Further, this collaboration has spawned additional collaboration between Michigan State University and our Court. Over the last five years we have jointly embarked on a systems analysis based on individual strength and risk assessment, case monitoring, and ecological risk and support factors. This project has spawned a successful joint grant application to the National Science Foundation and a recent submission to the National Institutes of Health.

I cannot overemphasize the degree to which this collaboration is valued. As I read the specifications for the award, I believe that our collaboration is a natural fit. This joint effort has clearly served the needs of the local community through real impact on crime and savings of scarce juvenile justice resources. It has provided invaluable educational experiences to large numbers of students. It has also produced new knowledge which will inform juvenile justice policy and practice for years to come. I strongly encourage your positive consideration of this application and would be happy to personally provide any additional information that may be required.

Sincerely,

Maureen Winslow

Maureen Winslow
Deputy Court Administrator
Family Division
Ingham County Circuit Court

MW:lw

Community Action Research: Benefits to Community Members and Service Providers

Joseph R. Ferrari
Editor-in-Chief

Roger N. Reeb
Guest Editor

Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community
Volume 32, Numbers 1/2

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SUMMARY. This paper argues that the issues facing effective prevention programs when they embark on dissemination, implementation, and routinization have been largely ignored by the field. Through the example of the Adolescent Diversion Program, these issues are illustrated and discussed. Four sequential longitudinal experimental studies are summarized as a context for the discussion of dissemination issues. In each case, the alternative preventive program is demonstrated to be more effective than traditional approaches. Challenges to widespread implementation of effective prevention programs are then discussed with a call for the field to add such issues to its scientific agenda. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS. Prevention, prevention program, juvenile delinquency treatment, dissemination

After nearly 30 years of operation, the Adolescent Diversion Project (ADP) has continued to divert youth from traditional juvenile court processing as a method of preventing future delinquency. The program has been focused on intervention methods which create an alternative to juvenile court within a strengths-based, advocacy framework (e.g., Davidson et al., 1990). In multiple randomized trials, ADP has demonstrated that youth exposed to alternative preventive interventions have lower rates of recidivism compared to youth who have either undergone traditional juvenile court processing or been released without further intervention. Further, the ADP costs a fraction of what traditional court processing does (Davidson et al., 1990; Davidson et al., 2000, Davidson & Redner, 1988; Smith et al., 2004). Also, the ADP has found that youth participating in the program have exhibited increased involvement with families, schools, employment, and reported overall positive experiences with the intervention (Davidson et al., 1990; Davidson et al., 2000). In addition, ADP has demonstrated that students working as advocates have reported increased political commitment (Angelique, 2002). For the purposes of the present paper, the outcomes of reduced recidivism rates and cost will be focused on. The present paper will provide a description of the history of the ADP, a summary of prior research on the program, and outline challenges facing effective alternative prevention models as they seek adoption and routinization.

PART I: COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH: BENEFITS TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Issues Facing the Dissemination of Prevention Programs: Three Decades of Research on the Adolescent Diversion Project

Marisa L. Sturza
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[Haworth co-indexing entry note]: "Issues Facing the Dissemination of Prevention Programs: Three Decades of Research on the Adolescent Diversion Project." Sturza, Marisa L. and William S. Davidson II. Co-published simultaneously in *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* (The Haworth Press, Inc.) Vol. 32, No. 1/2, 2006, pp. 5-24; and: *Community Action Research: Benefits to Community Members and Service Providers* (ed: Roger N. Reeb) The Haworth Press, Inc., 2006, pp. 5-24. Single or multiple copies of this article are available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service [1-800-HAWORTH, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (EST). E-mail address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com].

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HISTORY OF THE ADOLESCENT DIVERSION PROJECT (ADP)

Research on the ADP model was first conducted in the 1970s and replicated/extended through the 1980s and 1990s (Davidson et al., 1977; Davidson et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2003). The original prototype continues to operate in partnership with a local county in order to provide prevention services for over 100 youth per year. Diverting youth from traditional juvenile court services is the foundation of ADP. This notion of youth diversion originated out of the President's 1967 Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. This commission argued that the traditional system was so ineffective that alternatives had to be considered (Davidson et al., 2000; Gensheimer et al., 1986; President's Commission, 1967). The historical context for the development of the ADP model is important to understand. At the time of its inception, juvenile delinquency was a national priority. Further, it had been argued that the juvenile justice system was expensive, inhumane, and ineffective (Krisberg & Austin, 1976). It had even been argued that the traditional court increased future delinquency (e.g., Gold, 1974).

COMPONENTS OF ADP

Given the zeitgeist present at the time ADP was developed, it was clear that an alternative was needed. What was less clear was what should be done as an alternative. In other words, it was clear what not to do; it was less clear what to do. There were several prominent areas of research which were key to the original development of the ADP prevention model. First, as mentioned above, the creation of an alternative to the justice system (which became known as diversion) was recommended. Formally, the tenets of symbolic interactionism and labeling theory were central to design of the model. Second, the goal of providing preventive interventions which would minimize the negative effects of labeling and enhance positive expectations was included (e.g., Gold, 1974; Becker, 1968). The direct implication was that preventive interventions would best take place outside the formal court system and that the content of intervention should be positive in its focus. Third, at the time, a literature was beginning to develop which demonstrated that relatively intense interventions were more likely to be effective (Davidson,

et al., 1989; Lipsey, 1992). Finally, alternative preventive interventions (as is almost always the case) were expected to cost less.

Each of these factors played a key role in the development of the ADP model. The original preventive model occurred outside the juvenile justice system, accepting referrals from the juvenile division of a local police department as an alterative to formal prosecution. This structure had two advantages. First, it avoided the potential risks of overidentifying "potential delinquents" or "pre-delinquents" and ensured that the youth involved were truly at risk of official delinquency. Avoiding net widening was an important consideration (Sheldon, 1999). Second, it insured that the preventive intervention was truly an alternative to the formal system and hence preventive in its focus. This can be thought of as the systems level characteristics of this preventive program. Additionally, the preventive model involved individual-level intervention activities which were specific, positive, and intense. Originally, the promising alternatives of behavioral approaches (e.g., Patterson, 1971) and child advocacy (e.g., Davidson & Rapp, 1976) formed the basis of the individual-level intervention which took place in the diversion context. While relatively new on the scene of delinquency intervention at that juncture, both approaches had demonstrated considerable empirical promise (e.g., Davidson & Seidman, 1976), provided specific prescriptions for forming a preventive intervention model, and were strengths-based in their focus.

Finally, the intensity and cost of the preventive intervention had to be addressed. A related set of events was important in the construction of the ADP model. At the time, the systematic use of alternative person power groups (e.g., Rappaport et al., 1971) was achieving considerable promise. Further, the use of such groups as students and/or volunteers as change agents had demonstrated promising results while providing an inexpensive alternative for providing intense services (e.g., Tharp & Wetzel, 1969). Within this historical and theoretical context, the ADP prevention model was created. It involved the use of trained college students as change agents using behavioral and advocacy approaches in intense one-on-one preventive interventions in a diversionary, alternative context.

The major purpose of this article is to articulate the challenges successful prevention programs will face as they move from demonstrating their efficacy towards adoption as usual practice. To date, the preponderance of research on prevention has been focused on demonstrating efficacy. It has often been assumed that if effective alternatives are developed and demonstrated, widespread adoption will follow and

TABLE 1. Phase 1 Two-Year Follow-Up Recidivism Occurrences

Condition	n	Did not have further court contact	Had at least one additional contact with court
Behavioral Contracting/Advocacy	49	27	22
Control	24	1	23

Note. $\chi^2 = 17.68$, df = 1; $p < .001$

Phase 2

Phase 2 built upon the treatment versus control design of Phase 1, but instead expanded the number and type of conditions in order to more specifically test the effects of the preventive intervention components. In Phase 2, 228 youths participated. The participants were 83% male and 74% Caucasian. The youths were randomly assigned to one of six conditions: Action (AC), Action Family-Focus (AC-FF), Action Court-Setting (AC-CS), Relationship (RC), Attention Placebo (APC), and Control (CC).

The Action, Action Family-Focus, and Action Court-Setting groups all involved advocacy and behavioral contracting. The difference between these three conditions was that the Action condition used behavioral contracting and advocacy to focus on all domains of the youth's life (e.g., family, school, peers, and employment), the Action Family-Focus used these techniques to focus exclusively on the youth's family, and the Action Court-Setting used these techniques within the context of court supervision. As a strategy to directly examine the effects of conducting preventive interventions outside the court system, student change agents in the Action Court-Setting group were trained by ADP staff, but supervised by juvenile court staff. In many ways, the Action Court-Setting group was the beginning of examining dissemination issues. Specifically, the question of what would happen to the efficacy of the preventive model when turned over to the existing system for operation was investigated.

The Relationship condition focused specifically on the relationship between the advocate and the youth without the advocacy and behavioral contracting components. The Relationship condition was a direct attempt to examine the impact of the relationship component of the preventive model. In other words, this phase explored what the effect

routinization will follow (e.g., Mayer & Davidson, 2000). It is now clear that this is not the case, particularly as preventive alternatives are truly alternative and effective. The balance of this article will begin to elucidate the issues involved in these issues using the case of the ADP as an example. In order to set the stage for this discussion, the empirical history of ADP will be briefly reviewed for the reader not familiar with this empirical history. A relatively brief description of the outcome results of the ADP will be included here. For the interested reader, past studies presenting the results of the ADP over the past 25 to 30 years are provided in the Appendix.

OUTCOME RESEARCH ON THE ADP PREVENTION MODEL

Research evaluations of the ADP project have been broken up into four distinct phases (Davidson & Redner, 1988; Davidson et al., 1987; Smith et al., 2003). The purpose of the multi-phased project development has been to demonstrate reduced recidivism rates (Phase 1), determine the integrity and relative efficacy of the intervention components (Phase 2), examine the relative effectiveness of the types of advocates (Phase 3), and replicate the model in an urban setting allowing direct comparison of the model to usual processing (treatment as usual control) and outright release (no treatment control) (Phase 4).

Phase 1

In Phase 1, 73 youths participated, 84% who were male and 67% who were Caucasian. The conditions were dichotomized into treatment (ADP preventive intervention) and control (diversion without services). Preventive interventions were delivered one-on-one by college students (8 hours of intervention in the youth's environment per week), who were trained (80 hours of training) and supervised (two hours per week of supervision) in the use of behavioral contracting and child advocacy. The ADP group demonstrated significantly reduced recidivism rates when compared with the control group at both one and two-year follow-ups (Davidson et al,. 1977). While these results lent support to the ADP model of behavior contracting and advocacy, this was a preliminary study. The number of participants was relatively small and only a single city was involved. The need for systematic replication seemed paramount (see Table 1).

would be of the relationship components of the intervention when they were evaluated in isolation.

The Attention Placebo condition did not have a structured model of intervention and was included in Phase 2 research to determine whether the Action conditions produced different outcomes than a nonspecific intervention. Finally, the Control condition was included to provide a treatment as usual control (Davidson et al., 1990).

Results from Phase 2 demonstrated that the only condition that significantly reduced recidivism when compared to the Attention Placebo group was the Action condition. The Action Family-Focus and Relationship groups were both superior to the treatment as usual control, but not more than the attention Placebo group. The Action Court-Setting group demonstrated the highest rate of recidivism, higher than the control (Davidson et al., 1990) (see Table 2).

Phase 3

After testing the relative efficacy of intervention components, Phase 3 sought to investigate whether the type of change agent was critical. University students had been enlisted in the previous two studies as advocates, but Phase 3 compared them to both community college students and general community volunteers. In Phase 3, 129 youths participated who were primarily male (83.9%) and Caucasian (70.2%). They were randomly assigned to university students, community college students, or community volunteers. Results from Phase 3 demonstrated that all groups were more effective than a treatment as usual control in

TABLE 2. Phase 2 Two-Year Cumulative Follow-Up Recidivism Occurrences

Condition	n	Did not have further court contact	Had at least one additional contact with court
Action	76	47	29
Action Family Focus	24	13	11
Action Court Setting	12	4	8
Relationship	12	8	4
Attention Placebo	29	14	15
Control	60	23	37

Note. $\chi^2 = 10.29$, df = 5; $p < .07$

reducing recidivism, indicating that the model was robust across type of change agent. The results also showed that the university students had more knowledge of the model, spent significantly more time with their youth, and the youth in this group reported having more positive experiences with their advocates. Evaluation of change agents in Phase 3 found that although there were significant benefits to using university students over the other two groups, community college students and community volunteers may also be effective advocates for this population (Davidson et al., 1990). In terms of recruitment, retention, and supervision, university students cost substantially less than the other two groups (see Table 3).

Phase 4

Phase 4 research examined three additional issues. First, it was important to replicate the preventive model beyond the medium-sized city populations of Phases 1 through 3. Second, it was important to examine the ADP model in comparison to treatment, as usual control as well as no treatment control within the same study. Third, it was important to see if the ADP model would be effective when implemented by paid professional staff. In Phase 4, the ADP model was implemented and tested in a large urban city (n = 395) with a population that was 84% male, and 90.6% African American. Youth were randomly assigned to either the ADP model, diversion without services (no treatment control), or traditional juvenile court processing (treatment as usual control). The urban replicate of ADP included both advocacy and behavior contracting components. The change agents in this phase were paid community members. At one year follow-up, the recidivism rates for

TABLE 3. Phase 3 Two-Year Cumulative Follow-Up Recidivism Occurrences

Condition	n	Did not have further court contact	Had at least one additional contact with court
University Student Advocates	47	30	17
Community College Student Advocates	35	26	9
Community Volunteer Advocates	17	13	4
Control	25	8	17

Note. $\chi^2 = 13.38$, df = 3; $p < .01$

juvenile court processing or diversion without services. Each of these three studies found that the recidivism rates for these two groups of youth were not significantly different (Davidson & Johnson, 1986). Particularly important about these findings was that the three communities were unique from one another, including two mid-sized counties located in geographically distinct regions, and one small rural community.

Results in the first mid-sized county found that recidivism rates at one-year follow-up were identical for the traditional juvenile court processing group and the diversion without services group. Results in the second mid-sized county also found similar recidivism rates at one-year follow-up between youth in the juvenile court condition and youth in the diversion without services condition. Finally, in the rural community, rates were also similar for youth undergoing traditional court processing and for youth being diverted without services (Davidson & Johnson, 1986).

RELATIVE COST

In the collection of studies that evaluated three potential options– diversion with services, diversion without services, and traditional court processing–diversion without services was the most inexpensive option (Davidson & Johnson, 1986). Doing nothing typically costs the least in the short term. The most cost-effective services option was the ADP preventive model. The most costly option was traditional court processing (Davidson & Johnson, 1986).

Although the ADP prevention model has been demonstrated to be more inexpensive, there continues to be much larger proportions of money spent on traditional juvenile court services than on effective preventive alternatives. For example, in a recent analysis, ADP has cost approximately $1,020.83 per youth for an eighteen-week intervention, including all overhead and administrative costs. In comparison, the local juvenile court was spending $13,466 for the average youth served. While it must be noted that such comparisons are complex at best, these data derive from comparisons of expenditures on the same type of youth. Yet, these differences are rather striking. In a typical year, ADP provides preventive intervention to 144 youth, and the county juvenile court serves about 375 youth. The difference in cost of serving 144 youth in ADP versus traditional juvenile court results in a savings of approximately $1,799,104 per year.

youth who had completed the ADP model was significantly less than either the treatment as usual or no treatment controls (Davidson & Johnson, 1986; Smith et al., 2004) (see Table 4).

Phase 4 suggested that the ADP model could be effective with a youth population that is ethnically and geographically different from the population served in Phases 1 through 3 (Smith et al., 2004). Further, it demonstrated that ADP could be effective with community members as change agents.

Another important research finding from Phase 4 that has received less attention in the literature has been the lack of differential effects on youth who received traditional court services versus youth who received diversion without any services (Davidson et al., 1990; Davidson & Johnson, 1986; Smith et al., 2004). Diversion without services meant that youth were released with all charges dropped to return home to their parent(s)/guardian(s), with no further contact with the court system. In Phase 4, the recidivism rates for traditional court processing and diversion without services were nearly identical. This is interesting in that it replicates earlier work by Gold (1971) and Klein (1979) on which the diversion alternative was based. Phase 4 again calls into question the efficacy of usual court services. It is interesting to note that preventive alternatives are often held to the standard of demonstrating efficacy superior to traditional approaches when it may be that the typical approaches are themselves less than effective.

Further, Phase 4 demonstrated that the ADP prevention model produced superior recidivism rates in a random, longitudinal trial when compared to both youth who had received traditional juvenile court services and youth who had essentially received no intervention. Three additional studies, not discussed here and not involving the ADP prevention model, conducted in three different communities compared recidivism rates between youth randomly assigned to either traditional

TABLE 4. Phase 4 One-Year Follow-Up Recidivism Outcomes

Condition	n	Did not have further court contact	Had at least one additional contact with court
Family Support and Education	136	106	30
Diversion Without Services	135	92	43
Traditional Juvenile Court Processing	124	82	42

Note. $F = 40.13$, df = 2; $p < .001$

DILEMMAS IN THE DISSEMINATION AND ROUTINIZATION OF EFFECTIVE PREVENTIVE ALTERNATIVES

The stage is now set for understanding the dissemination and routinization issues facing effective preventive programs. The ADP model has demonstrated its relative efficacy to traditional models of handling juvenile offenders, it has demonstrated that it is relatively cost effective, and it has demonstrated that traditional methods may be less than effective. This is precisely the situation described by scholars of dissemination. Current thinking in the dissemination of innovations provides a framework for this understanding. Various authors have described these processes as a dynamic and nonlinear set of stages. After demonstrating efficacy, an innovation is thought to go through stages of adoption, implementation, and routinization (Blakely et al., 1987; Mayer & Davidson, 2000).

In the adoption phase, the issue is whether the effective preventive intervention will be used by the relevant systems. Akin to the use of new pharmaceutical, the marketing metaphor has often been employed (Fairweather & Tornatzky, 1977; Mayer & Davidson, 2000). How to get the new preventive intervention to the stage of use is the question at hand.

In the implementation phase, the question becomes, "How will the intervention be carried out?" Will the original preventive intervention be used in a manner similar to the original so that fidelity occurs and similar outcomes can be assured? In the case of preventive interventions, the issues involve the inclusion of similar participants and the delivery of preventive interventions which mirror the original prototype.

In the routinization phase, the goal is that the preventive intervention becomes part of normal practice. Will the existing system use the more effective preventive intervention instead of prior, less effective practices? The goal of routinization is to have the more effective intervention be viewed as "the way we do things" rather than some new ancillary alternative.

As we begin to examine the applicability of this model to effective preventive interventions, as elucidated by our experience with the ADP model, a number of dilemmas arise. An often unstated assumption of alternative preventive interventions is that, if effective, they will reduce the incidence and prevalence of the social problem being addressed. If this is the case, then adoption should be expected. However, if successful, effective preventive interventions will result in less demand for and resulting use of traditional approaches. Yet, many preventive interven-

tions are dependent upon the existing system for their source of participants (referrals) and even funding. In the case of the ADP preventive model, it is necessary for the existing juvenile justice system to refer youth to a traditional processing alternative. There are two potential outcomes of this which become problematic. First, if successful, the ADP model will reduce the demand for court services immediately by providing a dispositional alternative to court processing. In other words, youth diverted will not need a probation officer, court time, or residential treatment, etc. Second, if effective, future delinquency will be reduced, which will result in a further demand reduction for court services. This situation means that an existing system (in this case the juvenile justice system) will have to cooperate in adopting a program likely to ultimately reduce the size of that system. It seems that prevention programs, when successful, present a very clear-cut dilemma for the adoption phase of the process as currently conceived. In order to be adopted, effective preventive alternatives will need to compete for the very resources which support the status quo.

Another aspect of challenges to the prevailing paradigm occurs in the conceptualization of the implementation phase. Once adopted, it is important that an innovative prevention program operate in a manner congruent with the prototype which has been proven effective. In many cases, effective preventive interventions require role behaviors on the part of change agents which are incongruous with typical standard practice. For example, in the case of the ADP, it has been demonstrated important that innovative role behaviors including active case seeking, proactive intervention in the natural setting where youth live, high intensity of intervention, and positively oriented models of intervention are the likely sources of effectiveness. On the other hand, it is the typical practice for interventions within the juvenile justice system to be passive in their approach to case finding, "in the office" in their intervention modality, carrying caseloads where interventions are less than an hour per week, and following reactive, deterrence-based models of intervention. We know from the existing literature on implementation that high fidelity implementation is more likely to occur when the effective innovation requires performance patterns on the part of adoptees relatively congruent with current practice. The case in point is the example of the implementation of a new pharmaceutical for a known physical malady. High fidelity in such a situation requires a relatively small amount of change within an existing pattern of practice. Yet effective prevention programs, as in the case of the ADP, require major alterations in existing practice in order for true implementation to occur.

Specifically, the alternative, preventive nature of the ADP has created a significant barrier in its ability to move much further than the improvisation level of routinization. The ADP has displayed some of the characteristics of the improvisation level because of the long standing duration of the program, the weekly interaction it has with the juvenile court system, and its reliance on direct referrals by juvenile court officials to connect the youth population with the ADP. In fact, intakes of youth into the ADP are conducted by project staff at the county juvenile court. Further, funding for the project comes out of the same county fund as some of the services provided by the juvenile court. These are all examples of how the ADP has received some level of routinization into the juvenile court system.

On the contrary, there have also been examples demonstrating that the ADP has not achieved an expanded or disappearance level of routinization. First, the program has been considered a separate entity from the juvenile court by local government, the court, and the project itself. The juvenile court staff has not considered the ADP part of their domain. When it comes to budgeting, diversion has been considered separate from other juvenile court programs that come out of the same fund. Further, the project has considered itself affiliated with the university as opposed to the juvenile court. The question arises of whether it is possible for the program to become routinized into the court system while concurrently maintaining its founding ideology that it is a diversion from some of the negative effects that may result from involvement with juvenile court. Another example of how the ADP has not been considered a part of the court's daily activities is that the ADP has sometimes faced difficulties in receiving youth referrals from the court when compared with other youth programs that are internal, court-run programs. An additional struggle that has posed a challenge to the integration of the ADP has been the competition with the juvenile court for clients. The programs have not always been viewed as complementary, and the ADP has sometimes been viewed as a threat to the survival of the juvenile court programs. Both need youth to participate in order to function, yet there has been a limited pool of youth in the county who have been referred to juvenile court on a misdemeanor charge.

Also, another example of a barrier to the integration of the ADP has been the differences in values and theoretical orientations between the juvenile court and the ADP. The juvenile court has been operating on a treatment approach which believes that youth need to face the consequences of their actions, which is often enforced through punitive actions. Based on a different theoretical orientation, the ADP has aimed to

Further, Phase 2 research on the relative efficacy of the ADP indicated that routinization of prevention programs can also present challenges. Again, from the dissemination literature we know that routinization is an essential ingredient to long-term innovation stability. Becoming part of existing practice is the hallmark of innovation survival. Yet in the case of the ADP, the research indicated that turning over the preventive intervention to the existing justice system rather quickly destroyed its efficacy. However, it is at least an interesting observation that in order to become routinized, effective preventive programs may compromise their original impact.

To further elucidate these issues, the fiscal and organizational history of the ADP is instructive. Originally, the ADP was initiated with a large-scale federal grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health. With the use of "new outside" resources, adoption was accomplished. This is often the case during the development and demonstration of a new, effective preventive alternative. Our experience during these years was that adoption was relatively assured as long as external resources were available. Additionally, the independence of the effort (which Phase 2 research had demonstrated was critical) was easily maintained with outside funding.

After a decade and a half of external grant dollars, one variant of the ADP pursued continuation within the local funding situation. Since juvenile justice expenditures were a county-level responsibility in the state in question, the ADP proceeded to secure justice system support for continuation. Several amazing developments ensued. First, while the ADP had demonstrated its efficacy across four large-scale studies involving hundreds of youth, the local justice system, in budget hearings, argued that it simply could not afford to support the continuation of the ADP. Recall that the ADP model not only produced better outcomes, but did so at a fraction of the cost. To quote a judge, "I simply can't afford to lose a staff member to support this." The judge's view was that the budget required to support a more effective alternative translated into a loss of salary for an internal staff member. Second, the local legislative branch, foreseeing this challenge, chose to support continuation of the ADP, but outside the budget of the justice system. This had the dual effects of insuring the independence of the preventive alternative, yet at the same time presenting real challenges to routinization. Essentially, every year ADP funding was up for competition against other county departments. The need for political involvement in the dissemination process was magnified and the implied competition with the existing system was made public and explicit.

work with youth as a form of secondary prevention. The ADP has selected youth who have committed misdemeanors and tried to intervene in order to prevent them from any further contact with the court system. The actual structure of the ADP has differed from the more punitive treatment of the juvenile court model in that it has tried to build upon the strengths of youth without including a punitive component. These theoretical differences between the court and the ADP may have also been a factor in preventing a higher level of routinization, closer to the expansion or disappearance levels. Clearly, although the ADP has been in the routinization stage of the dissemination of innovation model, there have been barriers preventing it from moving to a higher level within the routinization stage. Based on this information about the process of dissemination of innovation, the question arises of whether or not the ADP staff would in fact want to fully integrate the project within the juvenile court system in its present state.

We describe these issues in the context of this special issue in order to raise these issues within the prevention literature. As Mayer and Davidson (2000) described the barriers facing innovative programs in general, "resistance to change is common and entrenched" (Mayer and Davidson, 2000, p. 433). To date, most of our efforts in the field have been focused on demonstrating the efficacy of our alternative approaches. The experiences described here would indicate that demonstrating program efficacy makes up less than half of the challenges and responsibilities we face. Further, it indicates that our current conceptualization of the prominent dissemination implementation paradigm present clear cut dilemmas for effective preventive alternatives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The challenge highlighted here is that future prevention research must move beyond only consideration of model development and include scientific inquiry into understanding how effective preventive models can survive. There is little doubt that future work will need to include additional levels of analysis beyond individual outcomes in order to understand these processes. Individual outcomes and cost, while important, may not be a strong enough armamentarium for the task at hand. While this type of research would expand our knowledge of community impact, alternative prevention programs would still face the challenges of being an "alternative" to a pre-established system, as outlined by the discussion of dissemination of innovation. It

is the hope that by providing evidence of individual outcomes across multiple domains and beginning to understand the complexities of long term survival, effective prevention programs may continue to sustain themselves.

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APPENDIX

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