



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

THE THEORY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The field of youth empowerment has a solid foundation of theory, at both process and outcomes levels. The process of empowerment provides opportunities for youth to develop skills and become problem solvers and decision makers. The outcomes refer to the result of the empowerment process, including the consequences of attempts to gain control in the community and the effects of interventions designed to empower participants. The theory of youth empowerment can be broken down into three components: individual empowerment, organizational empowerment, and community empowerment. While various researchers have demonstrated that the theory is sound, there is little record of the implementation, effectiveness, and accountability of youth empowerment.

Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!), however, has found a means to successfully implement all aspects of the theory of youth empowerment through the development of the YES! Youth Empowerment Model (© 2011 Youth Empowered Solutions). The Model is a three-pronged approach to empowerment that challenges youth to develop skills, gain critical awareness, and participate in opportunities that are necessary for creating community change. Intrinsic to the YES! Youth Empowerment Model is the theory of youth empowerment, not only aiding in the development of youth, but also helping to create generations of civically minded youth that take strategic actions to improve their communities. This paper discusses the three levels of youth empowerment (individual, organizational, and community) and highlights the effectiveness of the YES! Youth Empowerment Model and its fidelity to the youth empowerment theory.

The paper concludes that youth empowerment is a multi-level construct that requires an understanding of individual adaptation, organizational development, and community life evolution – representing the individual, organizational, and community levels of empowerment. Youth empowerment can also be both process and outcomes oriented, empowering youth with skill development, critical awareness, and opportunities, and creating empowered youth who have greater control in organizational and community decision-making.

YES! empowers youth, in partnership with adults, to create community change.

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