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# Youth Focus Group Study

July 2006

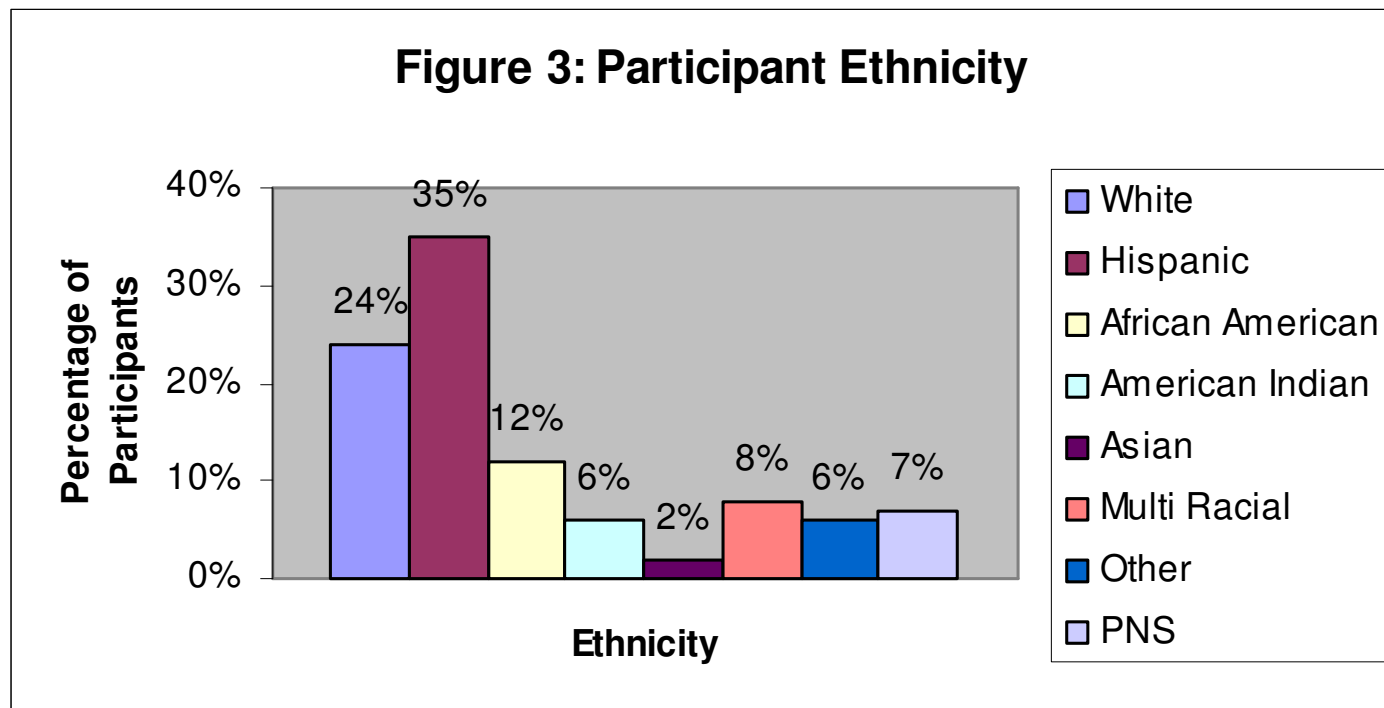
# Introduction and Background



- This focus group is Stage Two of a three-part study.
- Stage One consisted of a telephone survey of parents of youth ages eight to 14.
- Stage Two was intended to examine how youth spend their time after school from the youth's perspective.
- Stage Three will be a community asset mapping project.

# Results

- We spoke to 161 youth from 14 different programs, ages six to 18



# Focus Group Questions



- 1) What do you do after school gets out?
- 2) How does the program you're in make you feel?
- 3) If you could do anything after school what would you do?
- 4) What do other youth your age do after school?
- 5) Why do you think other youth do not go to a program after school?

# Key Findings

## Top Activities Youth Are Involved In



- Participating in activities and structured programs
- Going home and eating, sleeping, watching TV, doing homework and chores

# Top Reasons Youth Cited for Lack of Participation in After-School Programs

- Lack of interest due to perception of programs as uninteresting, concerns with social image and lack of desire to stay in school after school ends
- Parental concerns including lack of transportation, cost of programs and safety issues
- Lack of awareness or knowledge about programs by youth, parents and school staff

# Main Activities Youth Would Prefer To Be Doing

➤ Being more active: field trips, sports and outdoor activities

➤ Hanging out with friends in a place that offers independence, safety and the ability to “be themselves”



➤ Expressing and bettering themselves through creative endeavors, mental stimulation and skill development

# Stage One and Stage Two Outcome Comparison: Similarities

- Going home or participating in an after-school program or activity were the main options for youth
- The top three reported activities during after-school programs were sports/recreation, art/music and academic enrichment
- Reasons that youth do not participate in after-school programs include no need, affordability, transportation issues, lack of interest and knowledge about the program

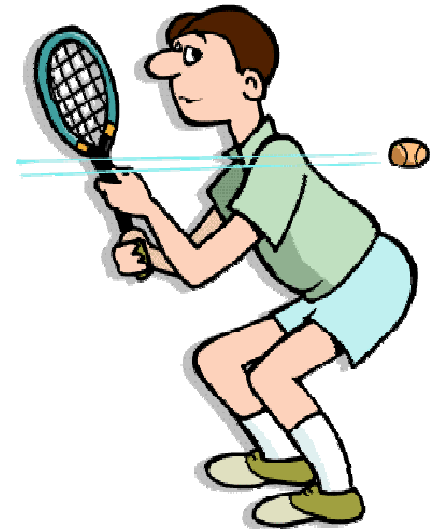
# Stage One and Stage Two Outcome Comparison: Differences

- Stage One quantitative, Stage Two qualitative
- Stage One cited going to relative or friend's home as a main option for youth; youth in Stage Two pointed out that going to these homes did not mean they were supervised
- Youth talked about many “at-risk” behaviors not mentioned in Stage One such as partying, loitering, fighting or vandalizing property



# Observations

- Youth in statistically lower-income areas mentioned program waiting list, affordability and transportation issues
- Youth in statistically higher-income areas mentioned a variety of activity options such as tennis, piano lessons, horseback riding



# Observations

- Older youth mentioned complex issues like lack of age-appropriate programs and instability in funding for programs
- Younger youth more often mentioned issues like safety and apprehension
- Youth of all ages wanted better food and a wider variety of activities

# What Did They Say?

## Youth Quotes On Independence



- “Why go to a place where the staff just tell you what to do and what you can’t do? There’s too many restrictions.”
- “Have free choice, where they can choose to do any activities that make them happy.”
- “A place to relax and just be yourself, where you don’t have to be at a desk or a table.”

# Youth Quotes On “At-Risk” Behaviors

- “Go party, drinking parties with older people, smoke weed.”
- “Some go home and sit... just float around, nowhere to go. “
- “People do drugs and stupid things because there’s nothing to do that’s interesting.”

# Youth Quotes On Ideas For Things To Do

➤ “We should have more projects in the community, like when I was in middle school we cleaned up and stuff.”

➤ “Something you could get up and ‘move’ to.”

➤ “If we could have one specific place where everything is held - don’t plan – have the kids design their own programs. Kids will be more apt to keep it going and clean if they’re in charge.”



# Unique Or Unusual Quotes



- “I volunteer at an after-school program. It makes me feel okay. I work with little kids and help staff out all day. The kids are ages six to ten. I like it!”
- “A couple of my friends volunteer at a support group for crisis pregnancy.”
- “I would make an arts club-it’s a club where there’s fire eaters and stuff, and it would teach us to be safe with fire a pyrotechnics class.”

# Suggested Improvements



- Agencies should include youth in program planning and/or ask for their ideas and opinions.
- Incorporate more physical activities, especially outdoors, in programs.
- Provide nutritious food and health information.
- Age-appropriate programs and activities are needed to better serve middle and high school youth.

# Our Recommendations



- Visibility of programs needs to be increased through creative marketing efforts.
- Creative solutions are needed to solve issues around affordability and transportation.
- The perceived gap in programs for older youth deserves further inquiry.

# Personal Thoughts On The Process



- Youth were honest and gave vital information.
- Youth had many positive things to say about programs enhancing skills and keeping them away from “at risk” behaviors.
- Issues of perception were especially important to middle school and older youth.

## Next Stage

- Stage Three will conclude this YDC investigation with a youth community asset mapping project

# Focus Group Results

- The full study results will be available online soon at:

<http://www.unitedwaytucson.org/>

- Community Impact
- Children
- YDC