Meeting the Special Needs of Girls and the Special Needs of Boys: Advocating for Equal Learning Opportunities in a Multicultural City Youth Club.

The Foothills City Youth Club (Colorado) is a nonprofit organization in an urban community at the base of the Rocky Mountains. Most of the children it serves are disadvantaged, and the club's membership is racially and ethnically diverse. The present youth club was formed when two youth organizations, viewed as similar in mission and practice, but different in population, programming, and philosophy, were forced by economics to merge. Although the local government and the community funding agency saw this merger as a way to save money, the move actually cost money, as the unified club was required to hire more staff and develop more programs. Even as the youth club has grown, its funding has decreased. The mission statement calls for providing for the "special needs of girls and the special needs of boys," but this is not easy to accomplish. The club's leadership believes that girls face oppression in society daily because of their sex, and that gender-specific programming is needed to aid girls in confronting that oppression. Providing this programming in the face of economic and social constraints and allowing for adequate programming for boys causes abundant contradictions that hamper the advocacy for youth envisioned when the youth club was formed. This constraints exclude some children from full participation in opportunities and benefits that could foster eventual economic success. (Contains 1 table and 14 references.) (SLD)
"Meeting the Special Needs of Girls and the Special Needs of Boys": Advocating for Equal Learning Opportunities in a Multicultural City Youth Club

by

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"What Would It Be Like If Boys Were Here?"

It is a Thursday afternoon and the North Side center of the Foothills City Youth Club (FCYC) is filled with children, girls and boys from ages 5-16. The club members and the adult staff are a diverse group. As I look around the room, I see brown, black, and white faces and many shades of each. The last van has completed its run to a distant elementary school on the east side and to Eastridge Commons, a low-economic apartment complex. A dozen children, struggling with winter coats and bulging backpacks, line up at the front desk to sign in. On the wall is a poster listing today's activities and the children sign up for their choices of things to do. An older club member monitors the sign-in process, keeps some order, and also answers the black phone on the desk that keeps ringing.

The North Side Center of the FCYC is located in the basement of an old, red-brick elementary school building built in the early part of the century. The local arts council had, up until recently, owned the building; now it belongs to the city Housing Authority. The upper floors are vacant and the FCYC rents the lower level for their after-school program.

There's a lot of excitement rolling through the club today, because later, many of the members are going to a roller skating party. A few children make their last minute reservations and pay their two dollars for the outing. Children stash their belongings in cubbies in the back hallway and then head for various rooms to play foosball, basketball, jump rope, and other games. Ready to search for Carmen Santiago, a girl and a boy join the two boys who are already seated at the used Apple computers in the corner.

A homework table is located in the front room and is bounded by bookcases filled with aged encyclopedias, dictionaries, and various books and magazines. A work-study, a young college student with short blonde hair and dressed in a sweater and jeans, sits down with the five girls who bring math workbooks to complete and social studies questions to answer. One girl finishes her last math problem and the work study shows her how to make the colorful fan of feathers of a peacock from notebook paper. The first grader talks about the beautiful peacocks she saw on her school field trip to the zoo that day.

Carmen, the program director for the center, comes out of the back room where she has just finished the Explorers' program for the boys and she quickly looks at the clock and picks up the sign-up sheet to see which girls are coming to Explorers today. She's interrupted by a girl and a boy, both about eight years old, who are fighting over a ball. "Leave her alone," Carmen warns the boy. "She said to leave her alone. Stop it! Give her...if she had the ball and you came and grabbed it from her, give it back." The boy reluctantly lets go of the red playground ball and mumbles something that Carmen could hear. "Sit over on the chairs in the front and take a time out," she says and she directs him to the gray cushioned chairs across from the front desk. She anxiously looks at the clock on the wall; the girls' Explorers class is now ten minutes late in getting started. She calls out for the girls who signed up for Explorers to come to the activities room in the back of the center.

Ten girls find their way to the back room and sit in the folding chairs that Carmen has put in a circle. The last girl in closes the door behind her. One girl is 15, but the others range in age from 7-12. Today's activity seems simple. Carmen has collected a wide variety of milk and juice cartons that she's cleaned out and she dumps them from a large, green, plastic bag onto the concrete floor. "You need to build something," Carmen instructed. "Here are the materials." She points to the cartons and to a wide assortment of construction paper, scraps of cardboard, and other types of paper in a large box that the girls could use. There are also some large plastic containers of white school glue.

Throughout this paper, pseudonyms are used for the names of individuals, organizations, and locations to protect the anonymity of the participants in this study.
The girls began to break up into groups and pairs and to talk among themselves, share their ideas, and discuss and deliberate what directions their constructions should take. They begin to create towers, houses, apartment buildings, shopping malls, and churches adding interesting and important details. Anna, who is seven, seemed intent on the form her church was taking, trying to figure out just how the steeple should be made. "My mind is working," she shared as Carmen asked her about her work.

The door to the activity room opens and two boys walk in; they are about 10 years old and one is wearing sunglasses. Several girls shout at them, "No boys! Girls only! Girls only!" The boys stand around and look at what the girls are doing, making no motions to leave. Carmen tells them that they had their chance to do the activity earlier and now it's the girls turn. They hesitate, picking up some of the cartons off the floor and she repeats herself and tells them that they'll have to leave. Carmen leaves the group of three girls she is working with and gently escorts the boys to the door and outside of the room. She returns and closes the door and locks it and returns to the group of girls who are busy putting together a shopping metropolis.

The time allowed for the activity soon grows short, and Carmen asks that the girls come back to the chairs which she had rearranged so that the girls could talk about what they had done and view all of their constructions. The girls take turns sharing what they had made and why they had decided to build what they had, how they had made their decisions, and why they had formed the groups and pairs that they had. They talk about the things that made them want to work together and what pushed people away.

Carmen then asks them, "If boys were in here, what would happen? Would it have been a different experience?"

"They would have just taken over; we wouldn't have been able to do anything," shares an 11 year old.

"They would have taken all the things and not let us use them," says Anna quietly.

"Some people are really mean. Some girls can be really mean, too, but mostly it's the boys," says another. "If you, like if you say something, they'll like laugh at you and say, 'Oh that's so stupid! How dumb girls are!'"

"All boys want to do is chase us around."

"Sometimes you don't really want to talk very much when you're with boys in the room," shares Jeanne, with her hands folded in her lap and her shoulders scrunched up around her neck. "It makes me feel kind of giddery, like gee! people are watching me. So it's kind of like you'll feel more relaxed with just girls there." Her shoulders relax.

The group discussion is interrupted by a call at the door from a staff person. The van is ready for transportation. Carmen glances at her watch noticing how quickly the session has passed by. The girls gather up their finished creations and hurry for the door. Carmen's eyes are tear-filled as she turns to me and says, "The whole processing that took place and the sharing—they said such profound things! Those girls realize what's happening around them, even at such a young age." She then excuses herself and quickly gathers up her things as she realizes that she will have to hurry now to make her night class.

Introduction: The Foothills City Youth Club, Foothills City, and the Explorers Program

The Foothills City Youth Club is a non-profit organization which is located in an urban community situated at the base of the Rocky Mountains. It operates two centers within the community—one on the north side of the city and the other on the south side. FCYC provides
after-school activities and programs for both girls and boys ages 5-18 (DOC 2.4). In addition to
the Explorers program, the FCYC provides programs that focus on alcohol, drug, and teen-
pregnancy prevention, health care, leadership skills, art, and athletics.

The youth club's membership is racially and ethnically diverse. Of the children
served, 65% are Latino, 26% are white, and 5% are African-American.2 Seven percent are
developmentally, emotionally, or physically challenged/disabled (DOC 2.2). The children
served by the Foothills City Youth Club and the Explorers program are primarily from
"disadvantaged circumstances" (DOC 2.1; 2.2). More than 50% of the children who are FCYC
members live in single-parent homes where working females are the head of the household
(DOC 2.2). Seventy-seven percent of the children who come to the FCYC live at or below the
level of poverty. Fifty percent of the children's families receive some kind of public assistance
(DOC 2.2).

Following a community needs assessment, organized by the United Way in 1992, it was
evident that there was great need in Foothills City for programs for the city's youth (DOC 3).
City leaders were particularly concerned about the fact that juvenile crime had increased in
the community (DOC 2; DOC 3). Juvenile arrests had increased 42% from 1983 to 1991, and the
highest number of arrests were in the 13-14 age group (DOC 2.3). Juvenile arrests for Latinos
increased 55% during that time period and 50% for females (DOC 2.3).

Within Foothills City, families on welfare cited unemployment, teenage pregnancy,
drug and alcohol abuse, and the shortage of recreational facilities as major neighborhood issues
(DOC 3). In Foothills City, minority youth unemployment ranged from 25-28% (DOC 2.2). In
the previous decade, female unemployment had increased 12% (DOC 2.2). The school dropout
rate in Foothills City was 4%, and though Latinos comprised 28.8% of the school population,
63% of those leaving school before graduation were Latino (DOC 2.3). Between 1986 and 1991,
adolescent pregnancy had increased from 16.3% to 20.2%. The teenage birth rate for Latinas

2Four percent of the population did not report their race/ethnicity.

Davis-3
was 38% and for African-American girls was 43% (DOC 2.3). Though 39% of the Foothills City population, Latinos comprised 88% of teen DUI arrests in 1991 (DOC 2.3).

The FCYC offers the community's children and youth a wide variety of prevention programs, recreational opportunities, cultural activities, and educational programs, like Explorers. As outlined in the FCYC mission statement, the organization seeks to "effectively meet the needs of youth in Foothills County, to help them overcome the effects of disadvantaged circumstances and to develop their capacity to be self-sufficient, responsible members of the community; and to serve as a vigorous advocate for youth focusing attention on the special needs of girls and the special needs of boys" (DOC 2.1).

FCYC goals include enabling girls "to conquer life's basic challenges in areas both traditional and non-traditional for women,...to prepare them to function independently and interdependently" and "to pursue careers that will provide them with economic autonomy" (DOC 4.1). A major purpose of the Explorer's program "is to convince girls that they have options other than low paying jobs in the pink-collar ghetto—and that sticking with math and science will help keep those options open" (DOC 1.81). Explorers' documents repeatedly point out the need for girls' continued education, especially in the areas of math and science, in order for them to be able to access better paying careers. In order to motivate girls and support their efforts to stay with math and science coursework, the FCYC provided several programs including Explorers.

Explorers is a national, research-based program that has been implemented in Girl's Youth Clubs (GYC) across the country. The program goals are to provide girls, especially minority girls and those with disabilities, with engaging, hands-on science activities and with community networking with professional women in non-traditional careers. Their goals are to stimulate girls' interest in science, math, and technology," and to motivate girls to "stick with" math and science courses and so that they may consider and pursue careers that have been traditionally closed to them (DOC i.iii; 1.6). In addition, the national GYC seeks to develop with each girl the process of scientific inquiry and problem solving so that she has the ability to be a "responsible and contributing" citizen within her community (DOC 1.5; 1.9).
The national Explorers program acknowledges and addresses girls' educational needs and experiences. Program materials document current research that points out 1) the limited participation of women and girls in scientific and technological careers; 2) the ways in which the lower expectations of teachers, parents and other adults discourage girls from participating in math and science activities, coursework, and careers; 3) the ways in which girls are socialized for specific kinds of work in society by various toys, activities, and games; 4) the ways in which boys in co-ed settings tend to dominate the use of materials and tools; 5) the lack of women role models in non-traditional careers; and 6) that many of the working poor are women and that often these women are the heads of their households (DOC 1.4).

As part of the program, Explorers members of the FCYC were provided with all of the necessary materials, the curriculum, the meeting space, adult leadership, and the program structure needed for Explorers to take place and for girls to have the opportunity to engage in math and science activities.

However, during the three months that I spent with the girls and their adult leaders in the Explorers program at Foothills City Youth Club, I came away feeling that though the program leaders provided girls with interesting and engaging math and science activities, there were underlying beliefs, structures, and practices that weakened the FCYC economically and interrupted the leadership's attempts to meet the goals of the organization as it worked with the community's children and youth.

**Constraints and Contradictions**

Issues of race, gender, and class oppression emerge in this setting. Oppression here is defined as "when one or more of the following conditions occur to all or a large portion" of a group's members:

"1) the benefits of their work or energy go to others without those others reciprocally benefiting them...; 2) they are excluded from participation in major social activities...the workplace [and education]; 3) they live and work under the authority of others and have little work autonomy and authority over others themselves...; 4) ...they have little opportunity and little audience for their expression of their experiences and perspective on social..."
events...(5) group members suffer random violence and harassment motivated by group hatred or fear." (Young, 1989, p. 123).

While "notions of double and triple oppression are not wholly inaccurate," McCarthy (1990) points out that "we need to see these relations as...complex, problematic and contradictory...That the operations of race, class and gender relations at the level of daily practices in schools, workplaces, etc. are systematically contradictory or nonsynchronous..." (p.83). "[I]ndividuals or groups, in their relation to economic, political and cultural institutions such as schools, do not share identical consciousness and express the same interests, needs or desires 'at the same point in time'"(Hicks in McCarthy, p. 83). It is in relation to the FCYC setting, a non-profit organization financially supported primarily by the community, that all players pertinent to the context: the city and county governments and other funding agencies, today's FCYC membership and adult leadership, and earlier Foothills City youth clubs (the Boys Youth Club and Girls Youth Club)--that all of these groups and individuals held various and often contradictory philosophies, "interests, needs,... desires" (Hicks in McCarthy, p. 83) in regards to the FCYC and the community's youth; though for many, their apparent goals may have seemed the same.

There are, indeed, a "mix of contingencies, interests, needs, and differential assets and capacities in the local setting" (McCarthy, 1990, p. 83) that must be clarified and sorted out to have a true understanding of this context. Therefore, the "organizing principles of selection, inclusion, and exclusion" are of great importance as they function in ways that affect how "marginalized" minorities—women, families, and children and the youth club of Foothills City—"are positioned in dominant social...policies ...agendas" and practices, making this setting "a site for the production of politics" (McCarthy, p. 83). This paper will discuss how such policies, agendas, and practices keep the FCYC in a constant state of struggle for economic survival and interfere with its mission to address the issues that are critical for its members. Specifically, in this paper, I will discuss how the merger of two city youth clubs (to form today's FCYC) and how community funding structures and practices served to interfere with the organization's mission of "meeting the special needs of girls and the special needs of boys"
I will also address how the co-ed nature of the combine organizations served to paint a picture of the conflicts, constraints, and contradictions between the FCYC mission, the beliefs of the leadership, and the practices of the institution and its staff.

Furthermore, McCarthy (1990) points out that "both mainstream and radical educators have failed to explore genuinely or to engage with the rich history of struggle, experiences and points of view that have been generated within minority communities and among other politically active groups in society" (p.116) In this paper, I reconstruct the history and status of the FCYC through the stories of the participants as I examine the specific struggles, contradictions, and community issues with regards to this setting (Johnson in McCarthy, 1990). My purpose, therefore, is to clarify the constraints faced daily by the leadership and members of the FCYC, which are, at the onset, vague and undetermined.

Keeping Them Poor: Historical Perspectives

Though the Foothills City Youth Club has been in existence since 1991, its history goes back 20 years. Beginning in the early 1970's, Foothills City had two separate youth clubs, the Girls Youth Club (GYC) and the Boys Youth Club (BYC), which were operated independently of each other. City and county government allocations, contributions from the United Way, occasional state and federal grants, and private contributions provided operating funds for the two organizations.

In 1991, the United Way and city and county officials "forced" a merger between the two organizations (IJ, IC, IL). The Boys Youth Club and the Girls Youth Club would have to merge and combine their programs if they wanted to continue to receive community financial support (IJ; FN 3.3.2; DOC 2.1). The principle funding agencies from the community felt hard-pressed to continue to fund two separate organizations that they perceived to have similar goals.

In reality, the two organizations were quite different. The Boys Youth Club was located at what is today the FCYC's South Side Center located in the center of the city's public housing project. The red-brick, two-story apartment buildings that border the youth center are
referred to by many as the "Bricks" (FN 3.3). At the time of the merger, the BYC director was
the only staff member, and he was "burned out" (IC 1.2; IJ 1.1). The BYC was a place where
about 30 boys would hang out each day and participate in recreational type activities, but
there were no developed programs for boys, not even organized sports (DOC 2.17, IC). Current
FCYC staff point out that in order to "keep kids off the street" (the BYC slogan), it is necessary
to provide programs and organized activities for children. Otherwise, they usually go
elsewhere looking for things to do (FN 4.29; IC). In other words, "kids vote with their feet"
(FN 4.29.7).

In contrast, the leadership at the Girls Youth Club, which was located at what is
today the FCYC's North Side Center, believed in the importance of offering girls knowledge
and skills so they could actually go out and change their lives (i.e., participate in non-
traditional careers; improve their lives economically) (IC). The GYC staff believed that they
did that with the research-based programs and organized activities that they provided their
members (IC).

In retrospect, then, though both organizations were seeking to aid children in the
community, the BYC and the GYC of Foothills City operated with varying degrees of vigor and
vitality and under different philosophies as to how to address the needs of children. In
contrast to the perceptions of community government and private funding agencies, the two
organizations were, in reality, quite different.

Importantly, though the merger was grounded in financial issues, it did not provide the
city with a true context for saving money. The city believed that the FCYC should be able to
get by with less staff, since they were bringing together two organizations (I). In reality, the
Boy's Youth Club was understaffed as it was serving an overall membership of 250 boys with
only one staff member (I; DOC 2.17). In addition new programs needed to be developed to meet
the needs of the new and increased population of the club. Therefore, with the merger, new
staff needed to be hired and new programs developed, yet community funding did not reflect
those needs (IJ). When the two organizations merged, the city actually cut support by almost 6% (IC). (See Chart A.)

In addition, though the total number of children served by the FCYC nearly doubled between 1990 and 1994, initial city and county allocations remained constant. (See Chart A.) In 1994, the county contributed only 2.3% of the $293,000 in its general funds to the FCYC (FCYC Executive Director, personal communication). Though the FCYC's record showed growth and development since the merger, the FCYC received only $7,000 in county funds, about the same funding allocated each year for over four years.3

Furthermore, the United Way, a major contributor to the FCYC, decreased its funding between 1992 and 1994. Due to a national scandal, Foothills City community members made fewer and fewer contributions to the United Way which affected the total amount of money that it had to distribute throughout the community (FCYC Executive Director, personal communication).

After community allocations were determined in 1993 and 1994, the FCYC Executive Director "pounded on the door" of city funding agents to obtain additional support (IJ). Through such persistence, she acquired $12,000 in 1993 and $10,000 in 1994 (IJ). These additional allocations came from Community Development Block Grants (CDBG's) which are federal moneys that are set aside for programs that will benefit individuals from low to moderate incomes (DOC 6). Though the FCYC had grown in its outreach to the youth of the community living under low-economic conditions, the city government still discouraged organizations such as the FCYC from "double-dipping" and making second funding requests from the city in the form of CDBG's (IJ).

Even with these additional funds, the FCYC was barely surviving financially during the spring of 1994. The executive director was not sure how the organization was going to pay the next month's rent for the North Side Center (FN 3.3.2; IJ). The following field notes,

3Yet, in that same year, the Housing and Human Services Advisory Board and the Foothills County Commissioners allocated $30,000 to a community nature center that had gone bankrupt (FCYC Executive Director, personal communication).
written following my first visit to the FCYC, provide a picture of the organization's funding
difficulties.

Today, I spent about two hours talking with Janice, the Executive Director of the FCYC. When I arrived at the North Side Center, she was all excited because she had received two checks—one for $15,000 from the sheriff’s charity auction and another for $1500 from some other donor. Janice was feeling pretty good.

A lot of our conversation today had to do with money, as that's her job—to run the organization on the money it has and to raise more money—grants and that sort of thing—to keep it going. There was a big HUD grant that they had had for awhile on which they did pretty well. However, they had lost that grant this past year, and they didn't know how they were even going to be able to maintain the organization. They had been kind of going from month to month until they got this $15,000 check today. Just in the last week, she was able to tell all of the staff that no one was going to lose their job—that they were all going to be able to stay. Yet, for the second or third year in a row, no one was getting a raise. Janice wants to work on that, but at least for now, the present staff members were all going to keep their jobs. (FN 3.3.2; 3.3.6)

The FCYC contends that it provides the “only comprehensive, prevention program for children and youth” in the county (FCYC Executive Director, personal communication; DOC 2.6). In addition, it is staffed by highly qualified people—60% have four year college degrees and 20% have two year degrees or some college education. Together, the staff of nine possesses “over 50 years of professional youth experience” (DOC 2.19). The FCYC’s professionalism, though, appears to offer the organization little economic advantage within the community.

To the contrary, the economic situation and status of the FCYC appeared to mirror that of the clientele that it served. During 1994, the FCYC staff cared for and provided programs and activities for as many as 140 children a day and for more than 1000 individual children during the year (DOC 2.13 and Executive Director, personal communication). The FCYC received “public assistance” through community and federal government funds and charities to carry out its programs for local, disadvantaged children and youth, and, where in 1991, the
community provided the FCYC with $178 for every child it served, in 1994, the support had dwindled to $98/child.

**Funding and Maintaining Programs**

The turbulent times that the organization experienced—its daily efforts to survive financially—made it difficult to adequately staff programs and provide the staff with necessary planning time. Leaders often didn't have sufficient time to work with the children in depth or to discuss the program activities with club members or other staff (IC). The organization struggled to provide the support that was needed to implement its programs and to achieve its goals. For example, one staff member states:

[I]f we had...a part-time person that really spent a lot of time and then was able to go and actually do those programs for the kids....I don't know maybe my fantasy is that it worked out and that that really happens..., but you get Explorers with real thought about it....I guess I'd like to see the program be stronger as far as the whole emphasis on science and math....

[I]t's not a full commitment on the FCYC's part and maybe that's just the way it has to be at least right now. I think intellectually we're definitely committed to that (Explorers) but, and maybe it's just because our organization has been in such turbulent times and just trying to survive, and so you do what you need to do to survive. So in that sense it's difficult to prioritize and really make that solid commitment...(IC 4.2; 4.6)

The organization often found itself short-staffed (FN 3.17.1; 4.14.2-6; 4.22.3; 4.28.12; 4.29.6-7; 5.5.11; 5.12.2). As a result, staff members often supervised children in large settings as opposed to working with them on specific programs. For example, a staff member stated,

[W]e take the easy road and the easy road is you can do sports real easy...can serve a lot of kids with less effort...so it's just doing whatever you need to do (IC 4.2; 4.6).

At times, staff members needed to stretch themselves to supervise the general comings and goings and unstructured activities of children at the centers and provide children with transportation which caused some programs to suffer or to not take place (FN 4.15.2; 4.22.5; 5.5.11; 5.12.2). The following field notes provide examples.

...
Today, Ron wanted to run his session, but the center was short-staffed. Cynthia had taken some kids home, and Carmen was leaving. He had three girls ready to do his planned activities and no other staff person to supervise the center. He had to wait until Cynthia got back before he could do his group. (FN 5.5.11)

Cynthia had planned to have a practice this afternoon over on the soccer field where the children play their games. However, that didn't work out because she had to stay and staff the center as they were short of personnel. She couldn't even take the kids outside because she had to stay inside. She had to hold soccer practice in the gym.

With limited finances, the FCYC struggled to meet monthly bills and to maintain quality staff. During this study, three staff members left the FCYC, one of whom pointed out the need to take a position that offered medical benefits (FN 5.19.20). The FCYC staff, primarily female (77.7%) and Latina (55.5%), were paid very low salaries; some were working full-time for the organization for $12,000-$18,000 (IJ), though the median income in Foothills City was approximately $25,000 (DOC 2.2). Though most of the staff were college-educated and had worked with the organization for over a decade (IC, IJ), low salaries kept these working women in much the same financial state as the women who headed the families that they served.

In sum, it appears that the merger between the two organizations did little to improve the financial status of the former GYC organization and its members and staff. The community did not adequately fund the new organization and low funding placed great constraints on the organization's ability to fulfill its mission statement. In fact with the additional responsibilities for programming and the increased membership, coupled with the decrease overall in community funding, the FCYC found itself operating on a survival mode on a daily basis.

It appears that the FCYC, which provided programs and interventions for children and youth from Foothills City's low-income and minority families, were themselves kept by the community as a low-income organization. As minority families and women in the community
struggled economically to care for their children, the FCYC, primarily staffed by women, many of whom are minorities, struggled to survive so that it could provide programs and support for these same low-income children. In all three contexts—the FCYC, its staff, and the families that they serve—women, primarily Latinas, "head the households," care for children, and work under low economic circumstances.

**A Conflicting Model for Girls and Boys**

Therefore, what is modeled for the youth of the Foothills City Youth Club contradicts that which FCYC adult leadership encourages them to strive for. Through the organization's programs, it is hoped that youth will acquire skills with which they can "change their lives" which means that they would have many more choices at home and in the community beyond simply daily economic survival.

As the educational system advances the view that "economic success depends on the possession of technical and cognitive skills" (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 103), the hope is that through programs like Explorers, minority youth, especially girls, will be motivated to stay in school and to continue with coursework that will enable them to enter into careers that provide higher salaries. Yet, how much impact does education and job experience have on the yearly income of females and minorities? Within the context of the FCYC, though 80% of the staff are college-educated—the majority of which are female and minority—they earn only 50% -70% of the median salary of their community (DOC 2; IJ).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) contend that education and job experience tend to advantage those that are "already economically advantaged" (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 99). They claim that "the economic return for schooling is twice as high for white males as for blacks and females" (p. 99). For most females, blacks, and white males of poorer family backgrounds, "these avenues turn out to be rather short, dead-end streets" (p. 99). McCarthy (1990) explains that the capacity to mobilize resources and to exploit the unequal reward system and symbolic rituals of schooling varies considerably according to the race, gender.
and class backgrounds of minority and majority students. White middle class male students therefore come into schools with clear social and economic advantages and in turn often have these advantages confirmed and augmented...this process is not simple, and the production of inequality in school is a highly contradictory and nonsynchronous phenomenon... (p. 23 and 24)

Furthermore, Bowles and Gintis (1976) point out that most socially oppressed groups, including Latinos, blacks, and women, fill secondary employment positions which are characterized by low wages, no acknowledgment of acquired training and skills, great employment instability, and few opportunities for promotion. Such a division in labor is based on several factors including 1) workers' "unique historical experiences in the process of integration into the capitalist economy" and 2) "the relative power they have in various sectors" (p.66).

Mohanty (1991) reports that "[h]istorians...have examined the operation of colonial rule" and studied "the effect of colonial policies on existing sexual divisions of labor..." (p. 18). For example, Stolar reports that while native women in third world countries bore the children of their European colonizers, they were expected to "keep men...marginally content...imposing neither the time consuming nor financial responsibilities that European family life was thought to demand..." (Chivon-Baron, in Stolar, 1989, p. 637). In Mexico, during the 16th century, native women served as slaves or domestic servants and usually as concubines to Spanish and Portuguese conquerors (Morner, 1967). The role of Latinas, therefore, was to serve men and take care of children with little economic return.

Mohanty (1991) compares the history of the immigration of white people and "the corresponding history of slavery and indentured labor of people of color in the U.S." She states: White men were considered "free labor" and could take a variety of jobs. At the same time, black men and women were used as slave labor to develop the agriculture of the South, and Mexican-Americans were paid much lower wages than whites for their work in the mines, railroads, lumber camps, oil extraction, and agriculture in the Southwest. These relations of inequality are the context for the entry of U.S. women of color into the labor force—usually in domestic or laundry work, or slave labor in the fields. (p. 24)

In order to further understand the economic constraints experienced by the FCYC, it is also important to examine the "relative power" of the groups and individuals in this context.
Nieto (1992) emphasizes the importance of understanding and acknowledging the "role that power" plays in reinforcing and legitimizing discriminatory practices and policies that result in "negative and destructive effects" for particular groups of people (p. 22). Important questions to ask next about this community context are "Who has the power to allocate funding?" "Who is in the driver's seat?"

The Foothills City Health and Human Services Commission reviews proposals for city funding, hears presentations from representatives of community organizations, and makes recommendations for allocations to the City Council (IJ). The Health and Human Services Commission is made up of volunteers from the community who are appointed by the City Council to serve for four years (DOC 5). They usually have an interest in community groups and often, in the past, they have served on boards of directors for various non-profit agencies and organizations in the community.

The commission is made up of ten Anglos, one Latino and one African American woman (who served as the chairperson in 1994). However, Foothills City is 56% white, 39% Latino, and 2% African American (DOC 2.2). The Commission, therefore, is not truly representative of the diverse community it serves. Neither is the Foothills City Council which is comprised of six whites and one Latino, five of which are men and two who are women (DOC 5).

Requests for county funding are first reviewed by the manager of Housing and Human Services (Manager of Housing and Human Services, personal communication). Selected proposals are then presented by representatives of community organizations to a Community Services Advisory Board, made up of volunteers from the community who represent (but who are not necessarily) members of low-income families, senior citizens, and community agencies. Though representatives from organizations are able to present their proposals to the Health and Human Services Commission and the Community Services Advisory Board, that does not mean that the women, children, families, and minorities who are served by the organizations

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4Three percent of the population did not report their racial/ethnic background.
will have an opportunity to speak for themselves and describe how programs and services are important in their lives.

Young (1989) points out that even when full citizenship has been extended to include all persons, the "extension of equal citizenship rights has not led to social justice and equality" (p.114). She argues that necessary for "social justice and equality" is the "inclusion and participation of everyone in public discussion" (p. 115). She contends that "decision-making requires mechanisms for group representation" (p. 115). A "democratic public" should provide structures so that the "voices and perspectives" of those "disadvantaged within it" can be expressed, that they can share experiences and determine how they relate in the social context, that they can express how the social policies of government, agencies, and institutions affect them, and lastly that they can also create policy themselves, and veto policy that serves to "affect a group directly" (Young, 1989, p. 124).

When one looks at the goals of the programs which the FCYC seeks to achieve--providing children and youth, girls and minorities with educational opportunities and experiences so that they might overcome their disadvantaged circumstances and enter into careers that will provide them with economic autonomy--one must also examine if true equality of educational opportunity exists. Howe (1993) claims that for true equality of educational opportunity to occur, "a participatory interpretation is required. Such an interpretation takes seriously...the fact that opportunity can only be properly understood as an interaction between individuals and institutions" and that "competing voices that have been historically silenced" must also be taken seriously (p. 334).

Here, then, a cycle is established in Foothills City that is continuous--the income and well-being of the "have-nots" (like the FCYC) continues to decline and decision-making bodies, which oversee the allocation of funds, remain dominated by dominant groups--specifically Anglos.
Meeting the Needs of Girls

Most of the leadership of the Foothills City Youth Club once worked with girls in the "just-girls" environment of the GYC, so reflections about the FCYC are often framed from that perspective. The question that Carmen asks girls in the opening vignette, "What would it be like if boys were here?" comes late in asking. The question ignores the presence of boys, as a result of the merger, in a space that was earlier for "girls-only." What does the presence of boys mean for the girls who come to the FCYC? What does it mean for the boys?

In talking with staff members, they acknowledge that the greatest benefit for girls has been their increased access to sports (IC, IL, FN). Because the South Side Center has a gym and because boys were involved with sports there at the onset, the organization provided girls an equal opportunity to participate in sports. Carmen explains further.

I've seen our girls, that because it was there and it was already in place for the boys, even though it wasn't in a very good place, I mean we had to make a lot of changes for the boys, but then because we were girl-oriented, we knew that we had to do the same for girls and to say that in a sense of operating athletic programs... of course it had to be done in a different way to encourage girls who had just sat there and watched the boys. So the girls really benefited in that way and so then we said that, "Well maybe you can do stuff in co-ed settings and get benefits that you wouldn't have been able to before." (IC 2.13)

The leadership of the Girls Youth Club, not having a gym at their center, "wouldn't have known to [engage girls in sports] and with that emphasis" (IC ). Today, the boys come in at the South Side Center and participate with enthusiasm. One staff member says that

...the girls see that and pick up on that. I've just seen girls' skill level just, it's amazing... I mean, I see girls, Lisa's 9 years old and she's one athlete and...that wouldn't have happened...[S]he would not have been able to, I think, express herself and recognize...what ability she has...I feel she's going to be a star (IC)

This staff member's daughter has also come to excel in sports as a result of her membership in the FCYC. She is a 6th grader and now she plays on an otherwise all boy eighth grade basketball team at her school.

Since the merger, the FCYC leadership has sought to maintain their long held goal of meeting the needs of girls. However there are continuous factors—contradictory and otherwise—that serve to dilute these efforts.
The national organization of the City Youth Clubs of America continually questions why the FCYC must maintain an affiliation with the Girls Youth Clubs of America. The national organization of Girls Youth Clubs is a valuable resource for research-based programs that are gender specific--written specifically to address the needs and issues of girls into today’s society (IJ). The national office also provides leadership and training for staff in these programs. In contrast, the City Youth Clubs of America focuses solely on co-ed programs (FN 28.2). The FCYC mission statement describes one of the organization's goals as "to serve as a vigorous advocate for youth focusing attention on the special needs of girls and the special needs of boys" (DOC 2.1). Janice, the FCYC Executive Director, argues that the FCYC mission statement now includes the goals of both organizations, it does not combine them, and the organization must be careful to acknowledge the distinctive needs and issues of boys and of girls in today's society and must provide programming to address both populations.

The mission statement creates some confusion and contradiction for the organization. For example, one Explorers leader acknowledges that more could be done for girls in the way of activities and programs, such as "during Women's History week," if the organization's concentration was more on the needs of girls (IC). However, since the merger, the FCYC has been "trying to make things equal...[and] it's somewhat difficult" (IC 2.19). The leader explains:

We were so used to, when we first merged, that the thought was everything has to be the same. We've got to make everything the same. We were so worried that anyone was going to say..."Oh they're getting more" or "They're getting less" it was like...you [have to make] everything the same. Well how ridiculous, but we had to do it, and, I mean, even in retrospect...it was probably good to do that. I mean that was just called survival and trying to keep the organization together and....It was a year before I could say, "But it is different."....I felt bad when I said it to the first staff person...."There [are] differences, there [are] differences from these kids that," and someone will to come in and [say], "The kids are kids," and kids are still kids, but you [have] got [to] recognize that things in their environments are going to make them...things different (IC 4.14).

This staff member is not sure that the organization can make the commitment to meet the needs of girls considering now that boys are included in the organization. "I don't even know..."
if we could within our mission, I mean, do the real kind of commitment that you have [to] when you have to consider the boys aspect..."(IC 4.2; 4.6). If the organization strives to meet the needs of girls through special programs then that means that boys should be provided with equal programs. That is why the Explorers program, though written specifically for girls, is offered to both boys and girls at FCYC, but in single-sex settings. Such an approach can mean that, because of funding, time, and staff constraints, girls may/do not get the programs that they need (i.e. Explorers, Women's History Week) and therefore, their needs are not met.

Traditionally, institutions often "shortchange girls" by establishing policies and approaches that are "gender-blind" in that they ignore the issues and experiences unique to women and girls and fail to address important aspects of their education that are critical to their futures (AAUW, 1992; Martin, 1992). "Gender-blind" institutions and individuals often attempt to achieve educational equity by treating both genders equally, and, as a result, they perpetuate "gender bias" and the "invisibility" of girls when making curricular decisions (AAUW, 1992; Martin, 1992).

One leader believes that the boys in the FCYC "certainly aren't being cheated one iota; they're getting everything that..., as much as we can give them, that they need and want" (IC 2.19). As for the girls, "they certainly aren't getting any special treatment, if anything, they're getting less than they should" (IC 2.19). She feels that she has to make a conscious effort to make sure that "girls aren't cheated" (IC 2.19). There are several contexts were this is true.

Within the larger context of the FCYC, boys often dominate adult talk and attention. It was rarely possible for me to have a conversation with a girl at either center without boys interrupting. The following example comes from my field notes of a visit to the North Side Center.

I wanted to talk to a couple of girls who were sitting at the computer center and find out what they were doing. However, a nine-year old boy started talking with me about the computers and about how his father was a pilot and how he hopes to go into the space program. He talked about how he was going on an airplane trip with his father. He really tried to
engage me in conversation. He continued to talk about his step-father who has a degree in chemistry and who was hoping to find a job in his field.

I was very conscious of the fact that he was taking my time. I wanted to give him time, but realized that he would take all of my time. There was no way that I was going to be able to ask these girls what they were doing or have any conversation with them, more or less provide them with equitable time. Finally, I told him that I was going to hunt up the Explorers class and he said, "Well, I'll talk to you while I walk you there." (FN N 3.10.2)

I shared the incident with a staff member. In order to talk to girls "you basically have to shut boys off," I told her. "And we're told you don't do that," she quickly replied. "I mean you wouldn't do that [to] anybody but maybe there's even a stronger [message] that you wouldn't do it to a boy, because they're less accepting of it. [With] a girl you could probably get away with...[that] a lot easier" (IC 2.21).

Kemper (cited in Bartky, 1990) describes this voluntary compliance with the needs, wishes, or interests of another as "status accord" (p. 109). For example, through frequent smiling and other bodily gestures, a woman urges a "man to continue his recital, hence, that he may continue to commandeerc the woman's time and attention" (Bartky, 1990, p. 109). When such "status" is not returned, the consistent attention by a woman is "acknowledgment of male supremacy" and women's "inferior position in the hierarchy of gender" (p. 109). The contradiction—the societal message that women—myself included—should continue to listen past the point of interest, desire, or need and the inability to model a different dynamic for girls or boys is embedded within the staff member and myself. However the message of the mission statement—to meet the needs of girls and boys—would indicate that the dynamics of communication between boys and women and girl need to be changed.

Though knowledgeable about the ways in which women's and girls' oppression is embedded in society and demonstrated continuously in daily contexts, one staff member finds that due to time and daily pressures, and I believe, conflicting societal messages, that she is rarely able to provide an environment that serves to make changes in the dynamic of
interaction between girls and boys at the center. For example, Carmen describes how she often "rescues" a girl.

"I rescue a girl, you know, because a boy’s bugging her and... she tells me, “Oh he keeps bugging me and he won’t leave me alone.” Sometimes I’ll say [to him], “Well just leave her alone and stop pestering her, she already asked [you] now leave her alone” instead of saying [to her], “OK, so what do we want to do about it?” Sometimes it’s maybe I think I can do that, but I don’t have time, 'cause it’s going to take... more time for me to take her hand and to say, “OK you need to tell him... What do you think you should...?” And “I’ll stand here by you and you tell him to leave you alone because I’m not going to be here next time maybe, so you need to be able to defend yourself. You go over there and I’ll support you and I’ll stand there and you tell him and I bet if I’m there and you give him the look that you really mean business and you’re not playing around, he won’t do it anymore.” [S]ometimes I don’t have time for that, because I don’t think about it, I just react “Leave her alone, she said to leave her alone and stop it”, you know... instead of having her do it. So I think in those rescuing situations I’m probably saying things that I’m not even conscious of at all, that I do for girls and for not having the expectations that they can do something (IC 2.20; 2.21).

Yet, importantly, Martin (1992) asserts that while “girls will have to learn to speak their minds and stand up for themselves...” boys will have to learn “to replace violence to others and themselves with positive acts of courage ...and counteract our male stereotypes” (p. 112). So, though FCYC programs and philosophies seek to empower girls and to serve as a "vigorous advocate for youth,” what is modeled is a contradiction—a girl is “rescued”—but only so that she can be “pestered” again, and a boy is not engaged in a different dynamic where his behavior is confronted in a way other than punishment and scolding.

Carmen views Explorer’s single-sex setting as important in order to foster girls’ "sisterhood" within the FCYC’s co-ed organization. Another Explorers leader describes this vision of sisterhood as

supporting each other as women...identifying with one another...realizing we are all dealing with the same pressures and different influences: What our parents want us to be. What our significant others want us to be. Whatever society says we should be. [That we] don’t fight with each other...[or] put each other down because of how we look, or [don’t say], “I can’t be your friend.” That it’s more “You’re OK.” [It’s] a unity or [that] we can help each other... (IL 3.12).

Therefore, "sisterhood" would avail the girls of friendship as well as personal acknowledgment and support for who they are as girls and individuals and to pursue the personal and career goals that they value.
Carmen states, "I think what's of value to the girls—...at least the minim[um] I can do is give them time...to be with just girls, that...space to be curious and to be encouraged" (IC 4.2). "[W]hen there are just girls there...they can learn the positiveness and the power that can come from that (IC 2.27)."

There are few opportunities for the girls who come to the Foothills City Youth Club to spend time with just each other and to develop new personal goals and ways of being. Carmen states:

There's not too many of those [places, as] schools [are] co-ed settings,...[and then]... after school, they are in their homes more than likely. It's all male-female so that now they have no opportunity to feel and accept the power that I think could come on up, more of a sense of sisterhood" (IC 2.27).

If the club was "just girls," Carmen thinks

...that [it] would eventually grow because then they (the girls) would sense that...good (feeling) to be able to just be yourself and not have to do this or do that to make boys notice you and [that] that's the most important thing” (IC 2.29; 2.30).

For the girls who come to the FCYC, especially to the South Side Center, many of whom are Latina, there is a "tradition and real cultural emphasis" which includes the "expectations that are being put on them at home" to raise and care for a family (IC 2.30).

Many afternoons, girls, ages 12-14, can be seen hanging around outside the center with their boyfriends (FN S 5.12). Also, it is not unusual for girls to come into the South Side Center, not to participate in FCYC programs, but to inquire as to the whereabouts of "my Marc" or "my Rick" (5.19.30). One staff member stated:

What are the disadvantages for the girls...when they participate over there (the South Side Center)?" because I think that...it comes from...themselves and society to say what's important...watching how the boys are reacting to them. So you'll see them (the girls) acting different, trying to please... (IC 2.30).

Most of the Explorer members describe their futures as primarily taken up with the raising of children and the caring for a home. For example, when Corina is 30 years old, she believes that she will be "home, cooking...and [be] a housewife" (IS8.5). She believes that she will do this because she cooks and cleans at home now. She believes that her future will also
include raising a family. Yet, Corina also predicts that she will work as a lawyer and be "on the good people's side" (p. 6). She knows that in order to do this she will have to "go to college and...get a degree" (p. 6).

Carmen, an Explorers leader, who is Mexican-American, shares that though her mother was an "independent and resourceful person," her message to Carmen was that she would "get married and find a good husband"—that was "the most important thing" (IC 2.30). Fine and Zane (1991) report that low-income adolescent women--Latina, black, and white--are involved in caring for themselves as well as family members, that they generally do not resent these responsibilities nor think of them excessive, yet they "are often forced to sacrifice their own educations and aspirations in the service of others" (p. 86).

Moraga (1983) describes the Latino tradition that was modeled by her mother as "nurturing/waiting on my father and brother all the days of her life. Always how if a man walked into the room, he was paid attention to [indulged] in a particular Latin-woman-to-man way" (p. xvi). Trask (1986) discusses "the dynamics of the patriarchal family, especially female child-care" as a primary component of the "sexual understructure" from which women's oppression is grounded (Rich in Trask, 1986, p. 2). "[E]xclusive gender, heterosexuality, the sexual division of labor" are also basic elements of the "sexual understructure" (p. 18), which, together, provides one with a basis from which we can begin to understand women's oppression and "cultural subordination" (p. 18).

In contrast, sisterhood is grounded in a shared vision of "the refusal of self-sacrifice, the courage of self-creation, and the creation of female bonding" (Trask, 1986, p. 153). Trask (1986) contends that it is sisterhood that "enables women to survive and grow" (p. 153). Through such a "collective," women can define themselves, pursue self-expression and creation, and nurture and care for themselves all apart from and in contrast to traditional patriarchal definitions and ways (p. 162). Through sisterhood, girls and women may be able to construct a context for self-development and exploration and participation in non-traditional careers and practices. Sisterhood is a vision that holds potential power and which drifts in and out of
conversation between the women leaders of this organization as they talk about programs for girls.

However, though Carmen sees that maybe what is the most valuable point about the Explorer program is that it provides the girls with time "to be with girls only, to be with just girls..." (IC 4.2), boys, and even male staff members, continually interrupt the girls' Explorers class and that "girls only" time. Boys constantly knock on the door and/or walk in. They come in and stand around and, despite the complaints of the girls, the boys will stand there, pick up materials, and ignore the girls' and the leaders' requests to leave. Often they must be physically escorted from the room and the door locked to keep them out. At times they are allowed to stay (FN). Carmen explains:

[A]nytime you close a door and they're just curious as to, you know, "Am I missing out on something?" or "Am I not being a part? Am I missing out?"...someone might be getting something that they are not getting and so they got to check [that] out to see if that's the case...and is it something that they do want to learn. (IC 2.25)

I mean I think that those boys open the door a lot. They find out everything that's going on. They're more curious, they're, they appear to be more curious, you know, what we're trying to develop in girls. They (girls) need to learn how to open the door. (IC 2.23)

Girls rarely interrupt the boys' Explorers classes, and though single-sex programs are in place at FCYC to provide girls with opportunities to “learn the positiveness and power that can come from sisterhood” (IC 2.27), boys interrupt program sessions and that is not perceived by adult leaders to be a negative thing (FN). Providing single-sex programs in the co-ed environment of the FCYC does not appear to provide girls with safe islands, safe havens to be themselves.

Summary

In 1991, two youth organizations in Foothills City, viewed by community leaders as similar in mission and practice, yet quite different in population, programming, philosophy, and vitality, were forced to come together as one. Whereas the local government and community funding agencies saw this as a means of saving money, the merger of the youth clubs
was more costly, requiring the need to hire more staff and develop more programs. Yet even as the FCYC has grown, doubling its numbers in four years, the community has decreased the amount of funding per child by 45%. Programs for children, primarily Latino and poor, which the FCYC believes will help children make their lives different, suffer. The responsibilities of staff increases, affording them less time to plan and interact with children in order to meet their needs.

The mission of the youth organization—"...to help [youth] overcome the effects of disadvantaged circumstances and to develop their capacity to be self-sufficient, responsible members of the community..." (DOC 2.1)—is also a goal of Foothills City government as they seek to fund viable community service organizations. Yet through policy and practice, government leaders, primarily Anglo and male, fail to acknowledge the legitimacy of the FCYC—the education, skills, and experience of its staff and its diverse programming for children for low-economic backgrounds. Funding cutbacks and discouraging practices keep the organization and its staff, which is female and primarily Latina, as economically challenged as the families they serve. Therefore, what is modeled for the community's minority and low-economic youth is that education, skill, and experience, that which the FCYC encourages for them in their programming, does not provide much of an opportunity for economic change. Therefore, there is a contradiction with what is emphasized as the solution and what is demonstrated in reality. The "have-nots" increasingly receive less and the power structures in the community, the decision-making bodies comprised of members of the dominant group remain constant, affording citizens affected by their decisions little voice or power to change practices and policies.

The FCYC’s mission statement also generates contradictions for the organization. In their efforts to provide for "the special needs of girls and the special needs of boys," it is perceived that that means that programming must be equal. Yet that conflicts with the leadership’s belief that girls within society face daily oppression because of their sex and that "gender-specific" programming is needed to aid girls in confronting that oppression. In
addition, single-sex programs within the co-ed setting do not provide the safe havens needed for girls to discuss the issues important to girls lives, as boys interrupt these settings, at times are allowed to stay, and demand staff time and attention. Also, though the lack of staff time is cited as a constraint to change the dynamics of interaction, there also appears to be conflict and contradictions between the societal expectations of women, girls, and boys and if, when, and how females need to stand up for themselves, nurture themselves, and develop sisterhood and if, when, and how boys need to change their behaviors.

In sum, within the context of the Foothills City Youth Club and the community it serves, there are abundant contradictions that place numerous constraints in the path of the organization's leadership as they seek to "advocate for youth" (DOC 2.1). Such constraints serve to further exclude these children from full participation in opportunities and benefits that society and the economy have to offer and foster for many a cycle of economic struggle.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


### INCOMING FUNDS
#### FOOTHILLS CITY YOUTH CLUB
#### 1990-1995

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| Total Community Funding | $67,559 | $54,500 | $122,059 | $110,500 | $108,200 | $103,500 + $89,700 | $10,000 |

| Contributions | $30,000 | $3,299 | $33,299 | $43,700 | $60,600 | $50,560 | $74,700 |
| Dues | $8,046 | $697 | $8,743 | $10,396 | $12,763 | $18,000 | $16,500 |
| Special Events | $4,400 | $3,100 | $7,500 | $12,700 | $10,252 | $16,000 | $16,800 |
| Federal Grants (HUD) | $39,239 | $39,774 | $270,000 (2 year) |
| Total Incoming Funds | $110,005 | $61,096 | $171,101 | $177,296 | $231,054 | $239,834 | $207,700 |

| Number of Members | 336 | 245 | 581 | 620 | 734 | 872 | 1022 |

*Indicates years where FCYC went back to the Foothills City Council and requested additional funding from federal funds. Additional amounts funded are noted separately.