Effectiveness of a community-based after-school substance use prevention program

The Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs- The Level Up! Program

By

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Abstract:

Introduction: I evaluated a community based after school substance prevention program for youth out of the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club located in Toronto. The examination of four key skills was conducted: peer mentorship, leadership, community connectedness, and knowledge to conduct an evaluation of the program.

Design and methods: Using secondary data provided by Health Canada, a small-scale (n=16) quantitative analysis was done to compare pre and post-tests. An observational site visit was conducted as part of a qualitative analysis to triangulate the data collected from the tests. Results: The tests and observations show some significant differences in some aspects of the skill development. The data analysis was inconclusive: there is no evidence that the program has significantly positive effects on skill development for substance prevention. Conclusions: Underprivileged communities require the development of more programs to aid youth in developing skills that will prevent deviant behavior, especially substance use and abuse.
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.1: Challenged Neighborhoods- In General ........................................................................ 1
  1.2: History of Regent Park .................................................................................................. 2
  1.3: Demographics of Regent Park ....................................................................................... 2
  1.4: Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club- Level Up! Program ....................................................... 4
  1.5: Research Question(s) ................................................................................................... 6

Chapter 2: Literature Review ................................................................................................. 7
  2.1: Main Assumptions of Prevention Programming and Skills Development .................... 7
  2.2: Major Intervening Mechanisms/Types of Research Design ......................................... 10
  2.3: Summary of Main Effects ............................................................................................ 12
  2.4: International Comparison ............................................................................................. 15
    2.4.1: Main Assumptions of Prevention Programming and Skills Development ............... 15
    2.4.2: Major Intervening Mechanisms/Types of Research Design .................................... 18
    2.4.3: Summary of Main Effects ....................................................................................... 19
    2.4.4: Additional Analyses ............................................................................................... 21
    2.4.5: Overall Thoughts ................................................................................................. 22

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................... 23
  3.1: Routine Activity Theory ............................................................................................... 24
  3.2: Collective Efficacy Theory ........................................................................................... 25
  3.3: Differential Association Theory .................................................................................... 26

Chapter 4: Methodology ....................................................................................................... 28
  4.1: Research Design .......................................................................................................... 28
  4.2: Sample Selection ........................................................................................................ 28
  4.3: Ethical Issues ............................................................................................................... 29

Chapter 5: Data and Findings ............................................................................................. 29
  5.1: Overview ..................................................................................................................... 29
  5.2: Peer Mentorship .......................................................................................................... 30
    5.2.1: Quantitative Analysis ............................................................................................. 30
    5.2.2: Qualitative Analysis .............................................................................................. 31
  5.3: Leadership .................................................................................................................. 34
    5.3.1: Quantitative Analysis ............................................................................................ 34
    5.3.2: Qualitative Analysis ............................................................................................ 35
  5.4: Collective Action ......................................................................................................... 37
    5.4.1: Quantitative Analysis ............................................................................................ 37
    5.4.2: Qualitative Analysis ............................................................................................ 39
  5.5: Knowledge Transfer ................................................................................................... 41
    5.5.1: Quantitative Analysis ............................................................................................ 41
    5.5.2: Qualitative Analysis ............................................................................................ 41
  5.6: Additional Observations .............................................................................................. 42

Chapter 6: Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 43
  6.1: Summary of the Main Findings of the Survey Results .................................................. 43
  6.2: Summary of the Main Findings of the Observational Site Visits .................................. 45
  6.3: Limitations: ................................................................................................................. 45
  6.4: Implications ............................................................................................................... 46
Chapter 1: Introduction

Education is one institution in our society that is highly regulated and is constantly evolving. It is the first societal sector that is impacted when we want to make a change in the surrounding community. Using a sociological and criminological lens to examine the relationship between education and the society and how they affect each other, is where my question will stem from. Over the time I spent completing my undergraduate degree, I had the opportunity to take many sociology courses that focused on society and educational institutions. This is what sparked my interest in the relationship between the two. These courses heavily discussed educational attainment and neighborhood and family economic status, but I was more interested in the connection between this socio-economic status (SES) and the behavior of middle school/high school students. The following paper will look into the relationship/connection between SES and behavior of deviant students and local programs. Regent Park’s Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club in Toronto will be used as a case study.

1.1: Challenged Neighborhoods- In General

“Millions of Americans suffer from substance abuse, which includes underage drinking, alcohol dependency, non-medical use of prescription drugs, abuse of over-the-counter medications, and illicit drug use” (Berk, 2013). This is not only true for the United States, but Canada as well. The Alberta Youth Experience Survey states that 26.7% of students self-reported using cannabis within the twelve months prior to the survey and 25.4% reported using any illicit drugs in the past year (School-based, 2009). The availability and accessibility to these drugs are increasing and it is especially problematic for young students in precarious neighborhoods. Youth substance abuse has been seen as having a direct negative impact on not only the user but their community as well (Berk, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand all the issues that are faced by at-risk youth who are considering using or are already using drugs because of its association with other antisocial and violent behaviors (School-based, 2009).

A study conducted in Vancouver in the mid-1980s came up with several social, economic and environmental factors that develop the illicit drug market. These include
but are not limited to: poverty, substandard housing, high unemployment, increased availability of the substances, and displacement of communities. In the study the authors discuss these factors and the way they influence youth substance use as availability and accessibility is higher than ever with globalization and transnational borders (A framework for action, 2001).

1.2: History of Regent Park

Regent Park was developed over fifty years ago in the heart of downtown Toronto and has been making headlines ever since: first for being hailed as a new innovative approach to social housing as it was built after World War Two in optimistic hopes that societal problems could be corrected. Then in the following few decades on being a community plagued with crime, violence, gangs and drugs. Regent Park is now under magnification for its new revitalization project under the Toronto Community Housing Project. Again, we see this ‘new innovative approach’ happening decades later in a revitalization approach.

1.3: Demographics of Regent Park

Regent Park is seen as the most diverse neighborhood in Toronto, and it is known that Toronto as a city prides itself on its diversity. It has been noted by multiple lists that Regent Park ranks in the 20 most challenged neighborhoods in Toronto due to its high unemployment rates, low median income, the number of dwellings that need major repairs and the high average annual teen birth rates (Doblas & Battye, 2005). To put it into perspective, Regent Park is one of the most economically disadvantaged regions in all of Canada (Pathways to Education Canada). Using data from the City of Toronto we see the following demographics taken from the 2011 census:

- Age: 20% of the population is under the age of 14, 16% are youth aged 15-24, 5.7% seniors aged 65+, with 58% working age (25-64). The City of Toronto notes that the dependency ratio for Regent Park – those under 15 and over 65 – is higher than the average for the rest of the city, due to the higher population of youth 24 years of age and younger.
• Families and Dwellings: When examining family structures and living arrangements of private households, the high number of lone parents – 750 – in comparison to 905 two-parent homes speaks volumes about the family dynamic of the youth living in the community. There is a higher rate of lone parent families in the Regent Park community compared to the rest of the city. Another noteworthy fact is that the majority of the lone parents were females.

• Language and ethnicity: 45% had a home language that was neither English nor French, with Bengali (11.9%), Tamil (4.6%) and Mandarin (4.5%) being the most common non-Official home languages spoken; a small percentage of individuals had no knowledge of either English or French at 8%. The neighborhood’s visible minority population is 75% compared to the city’s overall population, 49%.

(Toronto, “Regent Park neighborhood profile”)

These demographics provide a setting for complex issues such as crime and poverty. It is seen that crime rates are highest in these areas between the times of 2PM and 8PM on weekdays (Eccles et al, 2003; Synder & Sickmund, 2006). It is during these times that students are unsupervised and uninvolved with extra-curriculars. As a result, they become more vulnerable to potential negative societal risk factors. With this being known, the question remains why very little is being done in this context. Below is a snippet from the Toronto Star in November 2010 about a teenager being shot in this area:

The homicide squad is investigating after a teen was gunned down at a Regent Park townhouse complex Monday afternoon. A distressed man, believed to be the 18-year-old victim’s father, ran out in the intersection of Dundas and River Street’s just after 2 p.m. and flagged down a passing police cruiser on a routine patrol. Once out of the car, the Sergeant found the teen suffering from a gunshot wound on the first floor of one of the town houses. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene (Allen & White, 2010).

The victim was young, the area was that of a low SES and the incident occurred during the 2PM-8PM window. How many more of these incidents need to happen before a drastic change is made to help these areas and the individuals in them?
After school programs and summer programs—taking place at times when youth are not in school and most likely to be pulled towards risk factors—may be one key to aiding these areas with such issues as the ones noted above. As Eccles et al (2003) state, some research claims that structured programs would both facilitate positive development and prevent the emergence of developmental problems. If true, such projects and clubs could help get youth off the streets and involved in activities that interest them. This would inherently help guide them away from deviant behavior. This would not only improve the neighborhood as a whole, but would also motivate individuals as well.

1.4: Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club—Level Up! Program

This program was developed in the heart of Regent Park in hopes of combatting a prevalent problem in their community. The Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club of Canada (a non-profit organization that is found in many communities, especially in precarious neighborhoods all around Canada) located in Regent Park started an after school drug prevention program out of their facility for youths in grades 6 through 7. The twelve week-long program highlights leadership skills, drug prevention strategies and other skills to guide transitional youth through middle and high school with confidence (Level Up, 2015). One interesting fact about this program is that it is funded by Health Canada, depicting that the federal government supports programs and recognizes its importance as a stepping-stone in helping our youth.

The Boys and Girls Clubs staff, partners and local schools are become aware of the prevalence of drug use within their communities and its effect on youth participation in pro-social activities and peer-to-peer interactions. The report, Substance Use in Toronto: Issues, Impacts & Interventions (2005), emphasizes the importance of the following components to prevention programming: support for students from vulnerable neighborhoods/communities, effective training for parents/guardians to increase resiliency skills in children/youth, parental involvement, protective factors and Resiliency approach, and reaching children/youth at a young age to instill messages about potential harms and risks of substance use and to develop pro-social skills (Level Up, 2015).

This program was designed based on feedback from the youth and various partners in the community, responding to the direct nature of the changes that are
occurring in the community today around substance use and abuse. The facilitators of the program work with youth during this transitional period to enhance their "protective factors" and to reduce their "risk factors". Protective factors are those that are associated with reducing the potential for drug use. Risk factors are those that are associated with increasing the potential for drug use. Risk factors include (but are not limited to):

negative peer groups- direct/indirect, naivety towards the prevalence of substance use and abuse, and low self-esteem (School-based, 2009) Figure 1 outlines the key risk and protective factors for drug use outlined by The National Crime Prevention Centre (2009).

Figure 1:
The staff at the Boys and Girls Club developed a close and open relationship with the youths in their club where the youths felt comfortable to directly speak to staff regarding drug use and selling as a form of employment. As stated in the Level Up facilitation module guide in the forewords section (2015) “in recent years the community has seen a decentralization of key individuals who ‘ran’ and coordinated the distribution of illicit/prescriptions. Since the Regent Park revitalization [project] began, drug pushers have slowly been displaced from the community, leaving gaps in what was once a well-oiled and accessible machine to access drugs”. Over the past two to three years, youth (11-14 years of age) have been capitalizing on this precariousness of the landscape due to all the upheaval caused by the revitalization project (Bucerius & Thompson, 2013). The Boys and Girls Club intends to engage with their youth to prompt early intervention, skills development and access to employment opportunities, equipping them with the necessary tools to empower and disinterest them in partaking in risky and delinquent behavior.

Substance abuse prevention matters and strategies that target the root of the problem are essential in not only curbing drug use but also to help youths lead positive lives. “Early intervention helps prevent substance abuse and reduces the negative consequences of addiction before they occur” (Berk, 2013, p. 2).

1.5: Research Question(s)

Policy and program implementation is key to education and community based programming that provides youth in low-income neighborhoods with opportunities to “get off the streets” and develop and/or enhance skills. The Level Up aims to develop and enhance four skills to aid in substance prevention: leadership, peer mentorship, collective action, and ability to transfer knowledge. It is my intention to do a program evaluation to find out if it helps build these four skills and changes youth’s attitudes regarding substance use and deviant behavior. My questions revolve around asking: Does Level Up effectively build these skills? How does this program compare internationally and what are future implications and teachings that we can take away from this program and the various international ones? The aforementioned questions will be further elaborated through a sociological and criminological lens.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The initial age of onset for both alcohol and hard drug use is between the ages of 11 and 12 (Grades 6 and 7) among Canadian youth (Corrado & Cohen, 2002). This indicates the increasing number of youth using and abusing substances at a much younger age. Canadian, American and International research show those under the age of 18 who use alcohol and drugs has been significant over the last 15 years. Many argue that this increase comes at a time where society has developed a more casual outlook towards and recreational and moderate use of substances, and yet at the same time, there has also been an increase in the number of court cases, which revolve around trafficking of drugs and drug possession (Haans & Hotton, 2004). Negative effects of substance use goes past that and are compounded by negative behaviors including violence and aggression and a reduction in pro-social and familial bond which inherently increases their changes in becoming involved in crime (Preventing drug use, 2003). The John Howard Society of Manitoba (2011) states that it costs $100,000 to incarcerate a single youth for one year in Canada. The same amount of funding it would take to organize a community-based program that would reach dozens of at-risk youth.

An evaluation of the effects of drug prevention programming was conducted in California and found that rates of substance use decreased in youth who were exposed to this kind of prevention programming (Berk, 2013) reinforcing the idea that prevention programs can be effective. What needs to be emphasized is that prevention needs to be understood and there are effective and non-effective strategies to making prevention programs effective... “Many prevention experts say the time has come to hone strategies and maximize impact” (Berk, 2013, p. 3).

2.1: Main Assumptions of Prevention Programming and Skills Development

The prevention program called Stay SMART was part of the National Prevention program of The Boys and Girls Clubs of America and adapted the life skills training program originally made for school-based intervention. The Stay SMART program was initiated to help youth learn social and personal competence skills and to help them
identify and resist peer and other social pressures to use various substances (St. Pierre et al, 1992). Research has shown that the most promising drug prevention programs consist of (a) a focus on psychosocial factors that promote the initiation of substance use (Johnson et al, 1990) and (b) are designed to help influence peer relationships (Tobler, 1986)- both of which Stay SMART focuses on.

Johnson et al (1990) has reviewed research on substance abuse and was able to present findings that support comprehensive community-based programming and its significant impact on the prevalence rates of substance use in high-risk youth. The authors argue that risk factors are broken down into three categories: behavioral (prior substance use history), social (parental and peer influences) and demographic (age and gender). More complex risk factors are able to hypothesize that exposure to and interaction of various risk factors play a role in substance abuse (Schorr, 1988). Research argues that a comprehensive approach to preventative measures for youth substance use should focus on various influences that contribute to it: social factors, behavioral factors, mass media etc. Because of this it only makes sense that a comprehensive community intervention would take place to increase prevention exposure. Johnson et al (1990) state “a comprehensive community-based program that is large enough to be evaluated for effects on high-risk subgroups of youth as well as the general population would provide valuable information about the potential of primary prevention programs for reducing the drug abuse problem over the term and for reducing costs associated with drug abuse treatment”. From this I gather that a needs-based assessment of the community needs to occur and a program catered to that community’s needs must be put into place for optimal effectiveness.

In Germany Buhler et al (2008) reviewed the role of life skills promotion in substance abuse prevention programming in the “Allgemeine Lebenskompetenzen und Fertigkeiten” (ALF). This program is prevention program consisting of life skills training and examines substance use-related issues. Prevention programs that use a skills development approach promote “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable [them] to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO, 1994). Thus, the ALF program focuses on promoting positive development of skills as opposed to focusing on avoiding risks. The selective prevention programs Springer et al (2004) identified facets that are associated with positive outcomes in these prevention
programs that promote positive development rather than avoidance of risks, which include: life skills-related content, and connection building methods, programs that are run for longer periods in a week (more than 3 hours) and logical conception and implementation.

McNeal et al (2004) look at the All Stars program. This is a program used to reduce youth risk behavior such as substance abuse by targeting various psychosocial variables: (1) normative beliefs, (2) lifestyle incongruence, (3) commitment to not use drugs, and (4) bonding to a school/community. The attrition of these variables is important to target because these same variables are seen as emerging themes towards the onset of substance use in adolescents (Hansen, 2001). The primary focus of this program is to promote group discussion and interactive activities. There is no set curriculum; facilitators are trained to focus on the cohort’s specific needs and adapt the program to cater to these needs.

Botvin et al (1990) conducted a study that included a one-year follow up on evaluating the effectiveness of a cognitive-behavioral substance abuse prevention program that focused on teaching social resistance skills and enhancing general social and personal competence. Using other research such as Pentz (1983), these authors try to show that the efficacy of generic cognitive-behavioral skills training approaches, in addition to components of social resistance skills training and the acquisition of generic personal and social skills, makes substance abuse prevention programming successful for youth. One interesting fact that Botvin et al (1990) state is that these intervention effects can be produced regardless of where or who is delivering the program and that these approaches are found to be effective within rural, suburban and urban neighborhoods.

Overall, it can be seen that programs that are directed at breaking risk factors and promoting protective factors through a comprehensive community based program are essential. Allowing life skills to be built hones youth’s protective factors and gives them the opportunity to be less of a target to these risk factors in their communities. It is also important to recognize that community connectedness plays a significant role in allowing these pro-social skills to be developed and to reduce risk factors.
2.2: Major Intervening Mechanisms/Types of Research Design

St. Pierre et al (1992) questioned how effective the Boys and Girls Clubs would be in implementing a personal and social competence program (originally designed for schools) and its effects on substance use. A Stay SMART program with 2 years of booster courses was also created to compare three different groups. They administered a pre-post survey on their treatment groups (those administered with the Stay SMART program and the Stay SMART with booster program) and their control group (those who did not participate in either programs). These groups were made up of youth between the ages of 12-13, which from previously mentioned research is when prevention programming should be administered. A pre-test was administered before the 12-week Stay SMART program, a post-test after 3 months (the end of the first treatment groups programming), 15 months and 27 months (the end of the second treatment groups programming).

The Johnson et al (1990) article reviews research on substance abuse and looks at a community-based prevention program called Midwestern Prevention Program, that already had an impact on the rate of substance use in youth (Pentz et al, 1989). This paper attempts to understand the ability to replicate and the effectiveness of a multicomponent community drug abuse prevention program over a period of three years. The target group was composed of grades 6 and 7 students who were either placed in a trial or control group. Data was collected annually from these students, until they were in grades 9 and 10, through student questionnaires on substance use by themselves and their parents/friends (30-day use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana) (Pentz et al, 1989). Johnson et al (1990) analyze various risk factors that impact drug prevention program effectiveness, in this case: (1) high-risk youth have the least access to prevention programming and community services for early intervention (Tucker, 1985), (2) there is no significant change in drug abuse treatment rates about these high-risk youth implying that current community prevention education is not affecting these groups (Hawkins et al, 1986) and (3) youth at high-risk for substance abuse are also seen as high-risk youth for other problem behavior like delinquency (Hawkins et al, 1986; Jessor, 1982). These various risk factors explain that we require more research and programming for high-risk youth.
Buhler et al (2008) tested whether or not their ALF program (aimed at general competence enhancement) was effective in promoting life skills. Buhler et al (2008) also posed that participating in this program would result in heightened life skills, knowledge and behaviors as well as lower substance use and abuse compared to a control group. The researchers administered a pre and post-test study with a treatment and control group of fifth graders over a period of one year. The questions posed to these youth during the pre and posttests revolved around the youth’s substance use, the youth’s affinity towards substances and the youth’s life skills knowledge. The program is known to use interactive methods and emphasizes references to the day-to-day lives of these youth (Buhler et al, 2008).

McNeal et al (2004) had three goals that they wanted to examine, one being the effectiveness of the program as a substance use prevention program. The sample for this study came from middle schools in Kentucky, USA and was divided into programs being delivered by specialists, programs being delivered by regular facilitators and control groups where the program was not offered. Each group was given a pre and post survey within a 10 month period that assessed four variables: normative beliefs, lifestyle incongruence, commitment to avoid risky behavior, and bonding to school/community; it also assessed self-esteem, impulsive decision-making and sensation seeking.

In addition to examining the program’s effectiveness, Botvin et al (1990) were seeking to determine if peer leaders were more successful in delivering these programs. These researchers administered a pre and posttest and also did a one-year follow up from the post-test. These youth were seventh graders at the time of the pre and post-test. This study was conducted in New York and the participating schools were divided into groups: program being implemented by peer leaders alone, then with booster sessions; program being implemented by teachers, then with booster sessions and the control group. The questionnaires (pre, post and one year follow up) looked at self-reported substance use and questions revolving cognitive, attitudinal and personality variables. The data collected from these surveys underwent multiple quantitative tests- ANOVAs, GLM analyses and $t$ tests to look at differential attrition, to compare experimental and control conditions and to determine significant pair wise contrasts respectively.
2.3: Summary of Main Effects

The quantitative data that was collected and analyzed using ANOVA from St. Pierre et al (1992) reports that both the Stay SMART only group and the Stay SMART with boosters group reported significantly less drug-related behavior and more knowledge concerning drug use than the control group did. A note of caution for this study is that it was a quasi-experimental procedure and thus more difficult to draw a casual inference and to consider whether the results obtained were likely to have risen from biases resulting from the nature of this kind of study. Regardless of this limitation, results show that this prevention type programming in community youth-serving organization and is effective and supports the value and feasibility of delivering a community-based program like this one in various community settings.

As Kumpfer (1986) reinforces, offering structured prevention programs in community youth organizations like Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, YWCAs etc., provide various advantages: (1) they provide programming in communities where schools may not be offering prevention programming, (2) they may supplement school efforts by providing different insights of prevention to youth who already receive some kind of prevention programming, (3) they are able to reach youth who are truant in attending school and perhaps are more effectively engaging those for whom school is not a positive environment, (4) they are able to use the unique characteristics of these various organizations to meet the needs of their specific youth tailoring the programs to them for a more successful program, and lastly, (5) they are able to provide a smaller-scale, bottom-up approach for offering prevention programming. Because communities differ and are complex, having a comprehensive community prevention program takes into account the various needs of the high-risk subgroup youth as well as their developmental needs (Orlandi, 1986; Johnson et al, 1990). Are we able to see long term/short term differences in the effectiveness of such a program on youth?

Findings from the Johnson et al (1990) study shows that community-based prevention programming is effective in reducing the prevalence of cigarette and marijuana use at the ninth and tenth grade levels. This could be related to the fact that it was reinforced by other community program components. The data also showed that prevention programs like this were equally effective in reducing drug use in both high and low risk populations; not just low risk individuals. Overall Johnson et al (1990) state
that social resistance skill training and normative influences modification programs that are delivered to middle school youth in a comprehensive community program style shows effectiveness in terms of reducing the prevalence of substance use.

After collecting the data for ALF through the pre and post-tests, a mediation regression analysis was conducted to compare the two sets of data and between the control and treatment groups (Buhler et al, 2008). This study was able to replicate the significant effects found in other prevention programming which concerns the delay of the onset of substance use, affinity towards substances was also seen to have developed a more critical view against its consumption after being part of the program and lastly, those who were in the treatment group heightened their skills knowledge (ie. skills in problem solving and communication). As Buhler et al (2008) claim, the findings of these analyses shows that this prevention program achieved the goal of lowering substance use and abuse. The fifth graders were more knowledgeable about the subject and their use of general life skills increased.

This ALF program reiterates that learning techniques to manage daily demands in a successful manner helps these youths to develop their own critical views on reducing substance abuse and use. Enhancing protective factors leads to this reduction. The ALF program looked at building skills rather than correcting bad behavior, which is a different take than resistance skills training that we saw in Johnson et al’s (1990) study. After a year it was seen that increasing knowledge about life skills (skills such as problem solving and communication) decreased youth’s substance abuse. This positive change led to both cognitive and behavioral changes in these youths substance use and proves that changes in cognition regarding competence skills are vital to a positive and successful substance abuse prevention program (Buhler et al, 2008).

The All Stars program results that McNeal et al (2004) collected were analyzed using a hierarchical linear model. From this research it was evident that participants were found to have significantly lower rates of substance use, lower rates of initiation for all substances and also experienced significant changes in their commitment and lifestyle incongruence than their control counterparts. The result from this specific research sustains the importance for the application of mediating variable analysis to understanding programs such as this one. Multiple studies show that programs such as this are successful due to their targeting of risk (ie. Perceived norms, peer pressure etc)
and/or protective factors (bonding, decision-making and life skills) that are involved in substance use (Pentz, 2003). The All Stars program is effective because it targets several of these factors that are known to increase potential impact on youth’s substance use.

In the Botvin et al (1990) study it was clear that the peer booster and no booster sessions produced significantly better results in terms of substance use than the control and teacher conditions. Not only did the peer sections show better results in terms of substance use behavior but also in terms of impact on the cognitive, attitudinal and personality variables. Botvin et al (1990) found that youth who were peer-led showed significant behavioral results that the other groups did not show; more attitudinal than behavioral. This example shows that having elder peers leading these programs translates to better results and resonates well with youth. The program out of the Boys and Girls Clubs builds skills for these youth in these programs to become peer leaders themselves and to help other students in the future.

Cuijpers (2002) performed a meta-analysis on after school drug prevention programs and concluded that interactive programs that consist of life-skill teachings and training of generic skills such as assertiveness, coping and communication, are an affective component and are superior to non-interactive programs and to programs that focus solely on knowledge of substances. They also found that studies that emphasize social influence components, skills training, improvement of self-esteem and well-being are mediators that help make these programs more successful and create a behavioral change that would last longer.

When speaking about populations that are deemed as high risk, it is critical to understand that these individuals fall victim to social factors that push them into a realm of deviance. The youth in low-income communities are at higher risk of more deviant behavior. This is associated with this area allowing for a cause for concern of more victimization of youth (Johnson et al, 1990; St Pierre et al, 1992). Research has found that youth in disadvantaged communities, physical neighborhood disorder (Wei et al, 2005), family dysfunction and related risk factors (Turner et al, 2007) and higher crime rates (Hay et al, 2006) are more likely to skip classes and reject authority out of boredom and the desire to be adults. In the process of becoming and adopting adult-like behaviors individuals begin to use various substances and routine minor antisocial behaviors (Howell & Egley, 2005). The National Crime Prevention Centre (2009) has indicated that
interventions for such pathways should include traditional programs that provide education upgrading. With youth falling victim to these circumstances and choosing this kind of lifestyle, a major objective should be to provide these youth with pro-social alternative options. These opportunities will allow them to grow and follow a more positive path. Truancy is of great interest, especially in socially disorganized neighborhoods and these youth have been seen as more likely to engage in substance abuse (Henry & Huizinga, 2007) more of a reason to have community programs that interest youth and provide them with a safe haven.

2.4: International Comparison

To understand the full capability of such programs, it is helpful to explore how various countries and cities within these countries deal with the issue of substance use amongst our youth in today’s society. Below I have analyzed various international prevention programming.

2.4.1: Main Assumptions of Prevention Programming and Skills Development

Youth for EcoAction is an after-school gardening program where gardening is used as a tool to build at risk youth in low-income communities through the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg (Fulford & Thompson, 2013). It is “an example of a ‘participatory, bottom-up approach to development’ (Markey et al, 2005, p.2) with an emphasis on the capacity building of at-risk youth…in low-income communities” (Fulford & Thompson, 2013). A study done by Tebes et al (2007) in the United States investigates this kind of positive youth development (PYD) and how it can be utilized to address risk factors during unsupervised after school hours. Youth substance use and other risky behaviors can be attributed to these unsupervised periods (Richardson et al, 1993), but with structured after school programs- like we see in these programs- the risk factors associated with such attitudes have been suggested to be reduced (Gottfreson et al, 2004).

Authors of a Chinese study have claimed that: “drug use has led to many social problems, the true dimensions of which are probably underestimated” (Wu et al, 2002, p.
1952). The deviant behavior involving substance use has direct and indirect effects on communities and on oneself. There are multiple reasons as to why this community-based program was implemented in the Yunnan province, but two main reasons that are important to consider are: when “drug use is established in adolescence and early adulthood…it is costly and difficult to change once established…[and] drug abuse is a social behavior, embedded in the larger framework of community norms and social support systems that regulate the occurrence of these behaviors” (Wu et al, 2002, p. 1952). It is prudent that community-based programs are implemented to break these community norms and educate these youth, The Icelandic model saw that friend group association, extracurricular activities (or lack thereof), support of various guardians and the strengthening of social ties all play a significant role in deviant behavior in youth. Connections with peers and family, and the various opportunities available to the youth were viewed as strong predictors of substance use amongst the youth (Thorlindsson et al, 1998). We see that drug use can become a social norm and thus it is important to break this norm early on through instilling protective factors and reducing risk factors in communities.

In instilling protective factors and reducing risk factors it is important to take into consideration the communities you are dealing with. The various international programs varied in their target population but made sure to cater towards their cultures, as they need to be adaptive (Hoffman, Knight & Wallach, 2007). Brendtro et al (2005) have claimed through a Native lens that, “all children have four basic needs for positive development. 1) belonging, 2) mastery, 3) independence and 4) generosity and that these needs are usually unmet in modern communities which puts youth at risk” (Fulford & Thompson, 2013). These are needs that can be met through skill development (mentorship, leadership, self-esteem etc). This specific model is catered towards the population in Winnipeg and shows the importance of knowing ones communities to allow the youth to connect on a higher level. When looking at e Australian Indigenous community it was that elders incorporate native culture into their programming to hopefully avoid the eroding of the Native culture crisis (Lee et al, 2008). In the United States the Positive Youth Development Collaborative (PYDC) incorporated cultural heritage materials tailored to African-American and Hispanic youth, as these were the predominant demographics in these neighborhoods (Tebes et al, 2007). Culturally
adaptive programming is crucial in allowing youth to feel connected with their communities.

Along with promoting culturally adaptive programming in prevention studies it is also necessary that skill development is occurring. It is important that the curriculum being taught covers many topics such as understanding and coping with stress, learning strategies to reduce stress, learning effective decision-making skills, learning information about various drugs and alcohols, learning to identify positive personal attributes, setting goals for a healthy life and creating and enhancing social networks and resources (Tebes et al, 2007; Hallgreen & Andreasson, 2013). Connectedness and an increase in youth resilience promotes a ‘collaborative culture’ which is associated with addressing protective factors which leads to a decrease in deviance (ie. Substance misuse) (Lee et al, 2008).

All these skills are important to develop through a culturally adaptive model and a handful of the global studies showed some kind of government assistance to begin the prevention program process. A community-based model was designed and implemented by Iceland authorities. Using an evidence-based approach to substance use prevention, a group of stakeholders worked to build and implement their program using global research findings. This is another example of a bottoms-up approach as all the stakeholders came together to “build a network of support, monitoring and opportunities for positive youth development at the local community level” (Sigfusdottir et al, 2008, p.19). The same thing can be seen in Sweden where the government implemented community-based prevention programming. A guiding committee was allocated to various communities. These communities chose the kinds of programs they would like to implement (there was a list of accepted programming available) and the guiding committee assisted with planning and implementation. This kind of agency allowed the communities to pinpoint what they believed their people needed the most (Hallgreen & Andreasson, 2013).

When youth are provided with the setting to be actively involved and to contribute, everyone (including the community) gains knowledge and are able to discuss and reflect on how to prevent deviance in their communities and promote health and wellness (Fulford & Thompson, 2013). Trinidad (2009) states that having a youth-led section (ie. Peer mentorship) as part of a community change is effective in examining and breaking down structural discriminations and injustices. An important issue that Wu et al
raise is about the importance of having community based programming not just school-based. Realistically, children only receive about 6 years of schooling in China and other countries alike, and if interventions are school-based and begin after the 6 years of schooling mark, an astounding amount of youth are missing out. In remote Indigenous communities as well, youth attendance is low, thus any programming within schools may be worthless and community-based programming becomes a necessity. Community programming becomes even more vital to help break social norms that promote risk factors and educate youth through various skill development

2.4.2: Major Intervening Mechanisms/Types of Research Design

The various international models for prevention programming were evaluated for their effectiveness as a program. All programs examined whether the programs were able to reduce risk factors associated with substance use while also strengthening protective factors. They also all looked at how the program impacted the youth and the community as a whole.

Various research designs were used to evaluate these programs. Pre and posttest while comparing a treatment and control group was a prevalent tool used. The PYDC compared these groups before the September start of the 18-session curriculum and then again in June at the end of it (Tebes et al, 2007). The Swedish substance prevention trial ran for four years (2003-2007) in six ‘trial’ communities. They also used pre and post surveys comparing the six trial communities but also comparing the trial communities with control communities. Youth were surveyed repeatedly through a cross-sectional questionnaire to assess their changes in attitudes towards the consumption of alcohol (Hallgreen & Andreasson, 2013). The male youth (programming was only directed towards them) in the Yunnan province in both treatment and control groups were evaluated through pre and post interviews. Questions in this interview ranged from previous and present drug use to the youths’ understanding and knowledge of drugs (Wu et al, 2002). This method allows for us to examine whether a significant difference can be seen prior to the programming. It also allows us to conclusively state whether or not it is the program or not when looking at control and treatment groups.

The above is not the only way to evaluate programs. In Fulford & Thompson (2013) data was collected using observations and semi-structures interviews. Interviews
were conducted with the Boys and Girls staff members as well as the youth interns. It was important that the author decided to provide the observational study with interviews to allow for triangulation of the data. Lee et al (2008) use various quantitative and qualitative measures: observations of routine activities during site visits and interviews with indigenous and non-indigenous individuals (stakeholders in the community as well as students). An analysis of the management committee meeting and data collected by the educational and police departments of this territory, two years before and after the Unit’s formation, were used to assess the effectiveness of the program in its first 2 years. A very wholesome review of the program was attempted through this mixed methods approach to fully understand and analyze the impact and effect this program was having with the community and the youth.

It becomes evident through this that there are many ways of evaluating for effectiveness of a program. A common process is through pre and post surveys using control and treatment groups. Observations are also very helpful in allowing for triangulation as well. But, there are many other tools that have been used to allow for data collection to later allow for analysis.

2.4.3: Summary of Main Effects

The PYDC program showed youth were “significantly more likely to view drugs as harmful at program exit…, and demonstrated a significantly reduced incidence of past-30-day use of alcohol, marijuana or other drugs, as well as any drug use 1 year after program enrolment” (Tebes et al, 2007, p. 245). Although this was present, substance use amongst those who were in the program increased slightly over time. These increases, however, were seen as significantly less than the control group (Tebes et al, 2007). The Chinese model resembled similar results. There was a decrease in substance use for the treatment group youth, and a significantly greater understanding and knowledge and perception of drug use as well as prevention measures within this group of individuals. The authors Wu et al (2002) concluded “the greater improvement in knowledge and attitudes in the intervention villages provides additional evidence that the program was responsible for the decline” (p. 1954). A quantitative analysis was conducted on the data collected by surveys in the Indigenous communities in Australia, before and after the 2 years. The data showed that there was a decrease, but not a significant decrease in
youth’s substance use (Lee et al, 2008). What should also be known though is “participants reported an increase in recreation and training opportunities, skill development and improved connectedness following the formation of [the programming]” (Lee et al, 2008, p. 80).

The above were all able to show quantitatively that these programs were effectively changing youth attitudes. The data that was collected by Fulford & Thompson (2013) was analyzed qualitatively. The benefits thematically laid out through the interviews were skill building and job training, self-esteem and belonging building, understanding of nutrition, understanding of the environment and community building. Although this program does not directly address substance use, the themes in the interviews are about what these youth love about the program. Skill development steers youth away from deviant behavior and allows them to grow. This program is working toward positive development within these youth, which is a tremendous aspect of community development.

The findings above were not derived from longitudinal studies. What is seen then is an attitudinal change but not yet a behavioral change. The Icelandic model evaluation is a longitudinal study. Contingency tables were drawn out to understand the relationship between risk and protective factors. What was discovered from this 10-year study was that substance use amongst the youth in Iceland decreased significantly. The integration of this program was necessary and vital to achieving the end results. This study was consistent with theoretical upbringings about prevention programming regarding the reduction of risk factors and the enhancements of protective factors. What can also be observed is that in a longitudinal study done in Sweden there was no significant difference between the trial and control communities in terms of alcohol consumption, but there was a significant trend of declination. Unfortunately no measurable difference could be stated (Hallgreen & Andreasson, 2013). Therefore, although Sweden was unable to show a significant difference right away in their analysis, they were able to show that the programming was helping and going in the right direction.
2.4.4: Additional Analyses

In Fulford & Thompson (2013) an interesting observation was made looking at the comparison of prevention programming’s financial costs to incarceration. The John Howard Society of Manitoba (2011) reports that with about $100,000 of funding per year, community organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs can run programs like Youth EcoAction that are able to take these youth off the streets and lower their risk factors. This would benefit the entire community as opposed to incarcerating a youth, which costs $100,000 on average per year. The government declares a “decline in funding” for such programs, yet they have all these players in the judicial system waiting to “deal” with these youth.

It begs to wonder if modern westernized countries actually want to help these youth. Hierarchical segregation allows for economic stability, but what needs to be recognized is that these programs provided by community organizations are safe havens, as they allow for youth empowerment and community betterment. Using what they have in terms of budget, the achievement of this Boys and Girls Club is great and has impacted the lives of many youths and the community as a whole.

The Icelandic model is unique because of the scale used to implement the programming. It went beyond the youth and involved the entire community to build protective factors and eliminate risk factors. “Prevention efforts need to simultaneously activate the peer group, the school, the family and those who organize youth activities to reduce substance use” (Sigfusdottir et al, 2008, p.24). This is an important aspect that the other international programs lack. To allow for a more holistic view of if a youth and a community are growing everyone needs to be a part of the change. It is difficult for one to change if their surroundings are the same. Hallgreen & Andreasson (2013) state “the focus of recent community interventions has shifted from changing the behavior of ‘high risk’ individuals to modifying identifiable social and physical environments associated with alcohol and drug use- the ‘systems’ approach to prevention” (p.504). This is very important and all prevention programming should be moving towards this community holistic approach because although this prevention programming is targeted towards youth, the various risk and protective factors are also external and found in the community. What needs to be understood is that we should not forget about changing behaviors of youth but we need to also be adding whole community aspects as well.
There were some limitations that I found in some of the studies in their research design. In the Swedish model of prevention programming, the six communities that were chosen to be part of the trial were based on their capacity (ie. economical means) and willingness to try this program out in their communities. It must be emphasized that if communities have the capacity to implement such a program, the community might already be affluent and not disadvantaged; more of these deviant behaviors are likely to be seen in disadvantaged communities. Therefore, conclusions in a study like this need to be taken with a grain of salt as the results could be biased.

Another such study is the Chinese study. Although this study shows a significant decrease in substance use, I question why this programming was only offered to males. What about the females in their communities? It is quite unrealistic to just look at one gender in our day in age anymore. A more holistic view needs to be considered. This program did discuss developing important skills to sustain this kind of understanding within the youth. A more skill development-based prevention program has proven to be more effective in the long run and would be beneficial to apply in this setting as well.

In this Icelandic study a limitation in the research design comes from them only distributing their surveys to individuals who are in school. What about those who are not in schools (ie. homeless or prone to ‘skipping’)? This is the population of youth to target, as this in itself is where deviant behavior begins. Again we come back to the point that was mentioned earlier, that community based programming tends to encompass a larger group of youth, allowing for these programs to be reached by everyone. Using a community-based program is a new way to monitor and/or control substance use prevention. It allows to reduce risk factors associated with deviant behavior and to strengthen protective factors (that has been shown in the above research).

2.4.5: Overall Thoughts

Finding these articles was very difficult. I was not selective of the types of programs I was picking from the various countries, but from my research these were programs that were spoken about and had research done on them. A lot of research has been primarily done on school-based programs and examining their effectiveness in substance prevention. The lack of research on community-based prevention programming is alarming. It is crucial that we begin looking at these programs and understand if they
help our youth. Through research, it is evident that community based programming builds and develops key skills, which is crucial to prepare our youth for tomorrow. Although it was difficult to find these papers, these community-based programs are popular and can be seen as widespread, but rigorous evaluations are rare and difficult to find in academic literature, thus more studies need to be conducted.

Analyzing different countries, it is difficult to conclusively state that these programs have a lasting effect as only a few of the studies had longitudinal results. More long-term studies need to be done to definitively conclude weather or not these programs have an attitudinal and/or behavioral effect on the youth. The majority of these articles discuss how these countries catered previous programs to how they believe they would benefit their communities the best. This is a post-modernist approach of transformation, which takes us away from transmission of programming. By this I mean that it is understood that in order to contextualize a program for your own community, modification(s) must be made. Not only that but cultural differences were taken into consideration during the implementation and development of these programs. Making the programs work for the community is one of the most important aspects to achieve community development success.

Although all these programs use different approaches, different methods and results, it is important to understand that they all believe that community-based prevention programming is important and critical. It is evident that programs like the Level Up program are very international in scope and a multitude of communities are witnessing the same issues and target them through similar programming in hopes of decreasing and preventing deviant substance use behavior.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The underpinnings of the theories that will be used stem from criminological theories. Routine activity theory, collective efficacy theory and differential association theory will be used to look at the prevention of deviance; substance use and abuse in this specific case.
3.1: Routine Activity Theory

As per Cohen & Felson (2010), routine activity theory focuses on explaining the dynamics of criminal events, patterns of criminal victimization and predications of victimization risks/likelihood. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Inc, substance use can lead to criminal behavior: assaults, theft, motor vehicle offences etc. This closely links drug use and criminality.

The core of routine activity theory examines three necessary elements for crime to be present: the presence of potential offenders, the presence of suitable targets and the absence of capable and willing guardians. The theory is based on two propositions: routine activities create criminal opportunity structures by increasing the frequency between potential offenders, and suitable targets and these potential offenders are likely to assess a target in terms of their potential as well as whether there are forms of guardianship present when considering their crimes. The theory is interested in identifying the typical behaviors of persons and the characteristics that are associated with increased/decreased potential of criminal victimization. Within this theory, structural aspects of a context and individual choices are important to understand the reasoning behind criminal behavior (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1997). Using routine activity theory we see that we can develop and implement ‘crime’ prevention programs that incorporate any/all of the following: concrete strategies to enhance the number and quality of capable guardians, reduce the suitability of targets or educate people about actions and places that are deemed dangerous for them to make more informed decisions about their routine activities. High-risk communities would see more criminal victimization and routine activity, and Cohen & Felson (2010) were able to narrow down five important components to help explain criminal victimization: demographics, social activities, alcohol and drug use, economic status and structural aspects of communities. In this case study of Regent Park it is evident that more than one of these components applies. Economically, it is considered to be a low-income neighborhood; substance use is high and applying this theory we see that simply being in a setting where people are consuming substances that seem to trigger crime, there is a higher risk of criminalization. The structural aspect of the community is being revitalized but with this youth as young at 13 and 14, the past two to three years have been dangerously capitalizing on the precariousness of the current landscape. One key aspect of the program that is relevant to
routine activity theory is that it aims to get youth “off the streets” after school, which is a time period in which they might otherwise get into trouble.

3.2: Collective Efficacy Theory

It is important to look at prevention practices through assessing the capacity for collective efficacy in community-wide social change projects. It is also important to design group enablement programs so that youth can exert their influence over community practices and positively affect their well-being and that of the community (Smith et al, 2013). Collective efficacy is a concept that can be defined as the degree to which a group of individuals feel connected and confident in the willingness and ability of the group to act on its behalf (Sampson et al, 1999). This feeling of connectedness and the willingness to exert positive behavioral influence shows that deviant and delinquent behavior is less likely (Hirschi, 1969). Youth who felt more connected and willing to intervene were less likely to endorse violent/delinquent attitudes (Sampson et al, 1997; Simons et al, 2005; Johnson et al, 2011).

Discussing collective efficacy in the context of community based after school/summer programs, it is clear that participation in these programs has been increasing since parents are more likely to be involved in the work force (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). In the United States nearly seven million youth attend these programs (Capizzano et al, 2000) and the government has estimated spending around 1.1 billion dollars per year for such programming (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). Supervised, structured programming presents an opportunity for prevention activities to benefit youth during a time where school personnel are being hounded to show success and accountability. This leaves very little time to focus on activities around development during the school day (Smith et al, 2004). These structured and supportive programs during out-of-school time can be related to both positive development and decreased involvement in substance abuse, and inherently delinquency (Caldwell, 2005). This all relates back to promoting a sense of belonging, engagement and involvement among the youth- building collective efficacy (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Smith et al (2004) state that communities are important avenues for youth development, and that more research should be focused on attending to this meso-system
in which the community affects youth development. To decrease victimization and increase collective efficacy, important research points to these out of school times as particularly salient in promoting that feeling of connectedness and building those supportive relationships (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) to decrease deviance, especially substance use.

Programs like the All Star program (previously mentioned) proves that promoting bonding with positive social organizations like schools or community groups have a positive effect on the life of the youth. These social organizations reduced the chances of partaking in deviant behavior (Gottfreson et al, 2009). This was further proven when Harrington el al (2001) found positive effects for this program on bonding and commitment and its positive effect on the decrease of substance use at the end of the study.

3.3: Differential Association Theory

Differential Association theory examines the networks of peer groups that influence their behaviors: “direct association and interaction with others who engage in certain kinds of behavior; as well as…indirect association and identification with more distant reference groups” (Akers & Sellers, 2004). It posits that the values of a reference group reinforce behavior; most times it is deviant behavior. In this case, if a youth’s peer group placed a high value on substance use, the individual would be more likely to engage in such an act. Like routine activity theory, these youth are trying to separate from parents and become more ‘adult-like’ and want to gain the acceptance of their peers. A youth’s involvement in such a group greatly influences whether or not the youth will engage in similar behaviors that are modeled by their peers. The behavior is not performed because the peer group expects it but rather it becomes a natural part of how the youth functions (Johnson, 2009). In terms of substance abuse, people learn about substance use by associating with others who use them. Sutherland (1947) states that if the ratio between those who obeyed the law and those who defied it tilted in the wrong direction, the individual was more likely to deviate. Unfortunately with all the various economic, social and environmental factors in precarious neighborhoods, it is the perfect storm, so to say, for the ratio to be tipped.
With the help of empirical research, it is evidently important to identify the various factors that lead youth to having any involvement with antisocial peers and having any involvement with delinquent behavior. Community-based programs are developed to recognize that delinquency and antisocial peer association are factors that make up a complex developmental sequence (Gorman & White, 1995). Providing the right skill sets to impressionable youth at a young age will equip them with the tools and skills to be less influenced by peer group pressures. Sutherland (1947) states that the way individuals are raised by their parents influences who they choose as their peers. If the community-based program can guide youth, and parents alike, through preventative programming, the individual youth may be less inclined to gravitate towards the ‘wrong’ peer group.

Cuijpers (2002) references Botvin et al (1992) about how friends’ reactions to drug use is one of the most important mediators in making prevention programs successful. This is exactly what has been observed from Sutherland (1947). If we were able to equip youths with skills including social prevalence knowledge, normative expectations and other life and social skills they would be able to be less influenced by the reactions and pressures from their peers. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2003) claims that when youth are outside the family setting (which in this neighborhood is during the hours after school), one of the most important protective factors is the youth’s peer group. This protective factor becomes a risk factor many times, so after school programming keeps this as a protective factor to allow “good” influences on these youth to help them make “good” decisions. Simply put, if friends use substances a young person is more likely to do so as well.

Reed and Rountree (1997) describe differential association theory as “delinquency is a product of learning the norms, values, attitudes, rationalizations, motives, and drives...in intimate, face-to-face interaction and communication with significant others” (p. 3). As previously discussed, if youth are interacting and communicating on a regular basis with individuals that are delinquent, they themselves become normative of that culture. This is where peer mentorship plays a significant role in breaking this culture. When peer mentors are around, they are able to guide these youth in a different direction. The fact that these individuals are ‘peers’ to these youth is vital because the youth are more inclined to resist an adult authority figure. This creates a
sense of social selection for these youth so they know that they can choose whom they want and who is best in their social peer networks.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1: Research Design

I performed a quantitative analysis of secondary data to answer my research questions. The pre and post survey data that I used was provided by Health Canada. A researcher conducted interviews with youth (n= 16) participating in The Level Up program, before and after the 12-week program. The questions were divided into the four categories of skills that the program is trying to boost since it has been hypothesized that developing these skills will decrease substance use and deviant behavior. The questions asked in the surveys ranged from yes/no questions to multiple-choice questions. 20 questions were asked, but only 15 questions have been analyzed. I matched the youth’s pre and post survey answers and saw if they displayed any significant (p=.05) attitudinal change over the 12-week program.

To further solidify my analysis, a qualitative approach was also used where I went into one of the Boys and Girls Clubs locations to participate in an observational site visit. Using a pro-social checklist (Appendix A), I observed and tried to prove the data provided by the surveys to be true. The checklist was composed of 10 traits that should be present to help with pro-social skill development. Every time that trait was observed it is “ticked” off. At the end of the site visit all the “ticks” for each of the traits were totaled.

4.2: Sample Selection

The sample selection used can be classified as purposive sampling for both the quantitative and qualitative sections of this design. The youth were selected and grouped by the program facilitators, as they work with these youths daily and know whom to place together in order to bring out the most of each of them during this 12-week period. Both cohorts were composed of 8 youth (16 youth in total, 7 females and 9 males) ranging between the ages of 11 to 14 with the average age of 13. During the
Observational site visit, it was clear that these groupings of youth were done by age and personality to get the most out of these individuals during sessions (it was not ideal to have a 6 year old and a 13 year old grouped together). To micro select the type of purposive sampling it can be classified as a homogeneous sample for both as the sample shares the same characteristics (i.e., Age) and is chosen because this research question is addressing specific characteristics of this certain group.

4.3: Ethical Issues

I had originally planned on doing my own research rather than using secondary data. I had hoped to go into the facility to conduct pre and post interviews with the youth, one group as the control group and one group as the experimental group, during observational site visits. I received approval from The University of Toronto Ethics Board, but the barrier lay within the Boys and Girls Club foundation. They did not want an outsider to speak with the youth in their facilities, but they agreed that I could come in and observe. Due to this obstacle, data was provided by Health Canada who conducted pre and post interview surveys with the youth (but only with an experimental group; there was no control group).

Chapter 5: Data and Findings

5.1: Overview

Using the data provided by Health Canada, a quantitative analysis was done on 15/20 questions using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to see if a significant difference (p=.05) was evident between the two tests in a span of 12 weeks. This test was selected, as it is a non-parametric alternative to the paired sample t-test, which looks to compare “before” and “after”, but does not assume that the data is normally distributed. The purpose is to observe attitudinal changes, if any, in the youth regarding these four skill developments that are thought to be positive driving forces towards substance prevention programming. The pre and post-tests were divided into the four skill sets and each section
asked questions tailored to those skills. The data analysis below will be separated by those four skills. I have also broken down the ten traits from the observational site visit into the four skills from the survey and have used them to further understand if this program is successful.

5.2: Peer Mentorship

5.2.1: Quantitative Analysis

Table 1 contains data related to the building of peer mentors. The questions revolve around asking the youth who they consider to be a ‘peer’ and work towards finding out how comfortable they are discussing difficult issues and with whom. They are then asked about responsibility towards who should prevent deviant behavior and how they would confront those individuals. These questions are aimed to build the youth’s confidence and understanding of communication between themselves and their ‘peers’. Results from the Wilcoxon tests do not show any significant differences between the pre and post survey responses to the questions asked in this section.

What is a significant observation is that the youth seem to have a strong understanding that it is not only adults or staff that are responsible in talking to their peers and preventing deviant behavior. The youth realize that they themselves play a vital part in prevention as well. The youth have developed the confidence to confide in their peer mentors, and have learned that they have the ability to make a change. Both collective efficacy theory and differential association theory depict this. Youth who felt more connected and willing to intervene were less likely to endorse violent and delinquent attitudes. By building this confidence and understanding, the youth are more likely to intervene and say something to their peers, rather than be a bystander. With these youth placing high importance on non-deviant behavior, their association would be directed towards others who also place high importance on non-deviant behavior. This also allows the youth to help others by becoming a peer mentor to help associate these youth with individuals who make “good” decisions.

One interesting observation from this part of the survey is the last question in this section about communication. Youth have a better understanding that communicating via phone (text, talking on the phone) and computers (email, social media) are not the best
ways of dealing with difficult issues with peers. Even though a face-to-face conversation is more difficult, it is the most effective way to deal with such issues. Collective efficacy theory can be applied as the youth become more comfortable with their peers and their confidence rises. A peer is someone who looks out for you, and when peers look out for one another, they become less of a target for individuals who may pry on them. This basically postulates routine activity theory.

5.2.2: Qualitative Analysis

To triangulate this data, I used the pro-social skills checklist as my observational site visit tool. The three traits I found from the observational checklist that I classified under peer mentorship building were: helpfulness to their peers, concern for their peer’s needs/feelings, and verbal support/encouragements. In the total amount of time I was present at the club, each point was marked a total of 5 times. The youth helped each other clean up after breakfast time in the kitchen. Not one person was left to do the dishes; the youth were aware of their responsibilities and did not leave the job for others to do. If someone were walking away from doing their dishes the others would confront them and tell them they had to help out. Collective efficacy theory can be applied to this situation. Building that feeling of community and understanding, allows the youth to understand their place and role in helping one another.

Another observation I made was when a couple of students encouraged a peer who was not participating in the activities. They tried to make this individual feel like they were a part of the activity even when they did not feel like participating, encouraging and supporting the individual. This resonates with differential association theory, as this group included the lone youth in their activity. With encouragement and support, the individual felt accepted and felt more comfortable to participate and be a part of the group.

What I found to be surprising is that there seemed to be a lack of concern towards the needs and feelings of others. During an activity named “back of the bus”, some individuals called it “big booty” poking fun at one youth that the rest of the group felt portrayed that image. Although the individual did not display any feelings of hostility towards the matter, it was surprising that nothing was said or done to stop this kind of
interaction. This can be explained by differential association theory but in a negative fashion. As youth become comfortable with one another, the idea that certain behaviors, such as poking fun at someone else’s expense, is acceptable. These students are at a very impressionable age, and their peer groups influence them strongly. They are prone to engage in similar behaviors that are modeled by their peers as if it were natural to them.

It is clear that these youths are comfortable with each other, however I question if they would be more conscious of their actions if they were placed amongst other individuals in a similar setting. This raises an issue surrounding the ability to transfer skills to interactions outside this contextual boundary. If youth are placed outside of this group, will they be able to apply the skills that they have been taught? This issue of transferability can only be examined through a longitudinal study observing these youth in various aspects of their lives, to witness if this truly is an issue or not.

Table 1: Building Peer Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test (%)</th>
<th>Post-test (%)</th>
<th>Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (p=.05)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of ‘peer’:</td>
<td>Friend?</td>
<td>Family?</td>
<td>Teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling comfortable talking to peers about difficult issues</td>
<td>87 (.342)</td>
<td>56 (.512)</td>
<td>25 (.447)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to which peers about these difficult issues:</td>
<td>62 (.506)</td>
<td>38 (.506)</td>
<td>15 (.376)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who should prevent your peers from ‘bad’ behavior:</td>
<td>13 (.352)</td>
<td>67 (.488)</td>
<td>60 (.507)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best way to communicate difficult issues:</td>
<td>50 (.516)</td>
<td>56 (.512)</td>
<td>6 (.250)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3: Leadership

5.3.1: Quantitative Analysis

In Table 2 we look at questions and answers surrounding the building of leadership skills. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test does not reveal a statistically significant difference between the pre and post-test results. Questions in this section ranged from asking if the youth partake in activities outside of the classroom, to what they understand leadership to be and if they would like to identify as a leader.

Asking these sets of questions is especially important if we are to examine youth participation outside of the classroom. We are gauging their interaction with others and the confidence necessary to be a leader. When a student participates in extracurricular activities, they are able to broaden their horizons and gain knowledge that is beyond the classroom. These additional skills and traits one gains from participating elsewhere creates a stronger leader. All three theories can be applied here. When a student participates in various school/community clubs and builds leadership qualities, they become less of a suitable target; one of the three postulates of routine activity theory. When youth participate in activities that entice them and their interests, they build bonds and relationships with other individuals. This creates a feeling of community; as stated by the collective efficacy theory. Through differential association theory we can see the same occurrence: when students are engaged with other youth who share the same passions and interests in these school/community clubs they behave similarly; positive behavior in this case.

When the youth were asked about their intentions on becoming leaders their opinions did not change. When asked to explain why they did not want to be leaders, common responses included “it’s too much work” and “I’m not good enough”. The youth that expressed these concerns in the pre-test expressed the same concerns in the post-test. How can we appeal to the youth who have this impression of themselves? How can we show them that being a leader is not “too much work” and that everyone has the capability? More confidence building is required to assist the few youth that believe that they are not good enough or that it is too much work. When youth strive to be leaders they are able to implement positive change. Collective efficacy can be built and passed down and taught to others to follow route.
An interesting question asked was the first one in this section—what does it mean to be a leader? Various options were given: 1) having power and influence to make people do what I want; 2) knowing my strengths and weaknesses and supporting people in a way that gives them the best possibility of being successful; 3) being in charge of a group of people; 4) doing whatever I want to do whenever I want to do it. Although all these answers portray leadership in one form or another, the best answer is number 2.

Before this program, most of the youth chose answers 1 and 3. This depicts their interpretation of leadership as having power over people. By the end of the program, the youth’s perception of what it means to be a leader changed dramatically (as seen by the Wilcoxon test) and shows that their attitudes towards leadership was altered in the ‘right’ way. What is interesting to see is that some of the individuals who said they did not want to be leaders in the post-test perceived leadership to be associated with having power over others. Could this show that twelve weeks may not be enough time to help change these perceptions? It could also mean that different perceptions reflect a difference in understanding semantics; they understand a more colloquial meaning of the term ‘leadership’ (being a boss, association to power). The program is trying to promote positive leadership, as opposed to the placement of individuals in roles of power.

5.3.2: Qualitative Analysis

During the observational site visits, the three traits from the checklist of pro-social behavior that I categorized under leadership skills development were leadership, listening to others’ views, and making decisions. Some of the things I observed could be combined in all three of these traits; all of them documented around 6 instances each where these traits were demonstrated.

The instructor of the youth group informed them that they would all be going on a trip in the afternoon. The youth immediately began to discuss the pros and cons of the trip and what it was about. All the youth had some kind of input in this matter, actively participating. They recognized their strengths and weaknesses and fed off of each other and worked together. They were clearly confident enough and felt comfortable with one another. A safe community is created and the students all feel secure. Applying collective efficacy theory and differential association, they develop a positive relationship with each
other, and through routine activity are aware of skills preventing them from becoming suitable ‘targets’.

A second scenario during my visit was during the time of the activity “back of the bus”. The instructor knew that the majority of the youth knew what the game was about; so they were instructed to work together, explain to those who might not know the rules, and to facilitate the game. During the time that students were explaining the game, everyone was respectful and did not interrupt the individual speaking. If someone said something incorrect, someone else next would clarify and the group would collectively determine what the right instruction was. An interesting observance was that individuals in the group recognized when things were getting off topic and would try to get people back on track by reminding the group of what they were initially discussing. Although the youths’ answers in the pre and post-tests may signify that leadership skills may not be developing through this program, a firsthand view of pro-social development proves that many skills important in leadership development are present after all.

A minor complication is that this is a small group of youth. Coming back to the issue of transferability, I ponder if this politeness and various skills can be transferred to other settings. They may be respectful and helpful to their peers in this group since they have developed a connection and sense of understanding with them. This, however, may not necessarily transcend into other groups or environments. A ‘ceiling effect’ can also be observed from these results. The youth may have answered questions in the pre-test with the ‘correct’ or ‘ideal’ answer, thus when asked in the post-test answered the same; this would show no development of skills or knowledge. These questions are limited and do illustrate whether or not the youth are changing attitudinally in their thoughts of substance use. The only way to conclusively tell if the ceiling effect is taking place is if a longitudinal study is performed to find out if the youth were just giving answers that they thought were ‘ideal’ or if they were being honest.

Table 2: Building Strong Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test (%)</th>
<th>Post-test (%)</th>
<th>Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (p=.05)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive leadership</strong></td>
<td>31 (.479)</td>
<td>87 (.342)</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(those who answered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“right choice”) vs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(chose other options)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intent to be a leader</strong></td>
<td>69 (.479)</td>
<td>81 (.403)</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73 (.458)</td>
<td>75 (.447)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4: Collective Action

5.4.1: Quantitative Analysis

From the literature and theories mentioned above it is quite evident that community connection is essential to developing students and preventing them from substance abuse and deviant behaviors. The third section of this test will examine collective action. In Table 3, the data associated with all the questions revolves around the youth’s connection with their community, whether or not prevention is talked about and if they felt comfortable approaching their community members if they felt pressured by others.

Although mixed results are presented the data shows that from the pre to the post-tests that the youth felt more connected with their community. Having a ‘community’ after school centre like The Boys and Girls Clubs provides these youths with a safe space to feel connected with their community and the opportunity to interact with various
members and stakeholders of their community. The building of collective efficacy is largely significant in this case. Allowing youth to understand the opportunities and resources available in their community makes them feel as though they are a part of something bigger. This builds this efficacy within them and around them, so they feel more comfortable. This in turn aids in terms of routine activity theory as they become less of a target and have familiarized themselves with willing and capable individuals in their community.

In terms of whether the youth felt comfortable approaching their community members if they ever felt pressured, there was a significant difference. After the twelve week-long program the youth felt a lot more comfortable approaching individuals in their community if they ever felt uncomfortable. This proves that they feel more connected and more open to speaking about issues that may arise. Once again, we see the building of collective efficacy and routine activity.

When asked who the youth would approach if they were curious to learn more about substance use, the pre-test answers illustrated that the majority of the youth would use the internet and/or ask friends. The problem is that these sources lack reliability. By the end of the twelve-week program, these individuals were more likely to approach a staff member (who would be able to assist or to direct them to individuals who are qualified and may have access to more reliable sources) or another adult in the community. Once again we see the foundations of collective efficacy and postulates of routine activity theory being built upon through these questions pre and post-test answers.

Lastly, when the youth were asked if their family/community discussed health and drug prevention with them, it was clear that prior to the program they were unaware of the fact that individuals in the community were talking about these important issues. They were also not aware of the resources that were available to aid with this discussion. By the end of the program it was clear that youth experienced a significant increase in discussions regarding health and substance use, and that they recognized what help was available in their community. They better understood that facilities like The Boys and Girls clubs promotes health and drug prevention.
5.4.2: Qualitative Analysis

While observing at the facility, I examined cooperation and compromise/conflict resolution for collective action as these two traits play a role in how one interacts with the community and comfort in doing so. One day I was observing the youth and they were having a workshop on conflict resolution. The instructor explained a scenario, everyone was given a specific role, and they had to work together to find a solution for this scenario. What I observed during this workshop was that the youth were not taking the activity seriously. For the first time I saw them laughing and making jokes and were not concerned with the severity of the issue at hand- even though it was just an activity. A similar situation can be scoped out of an article in which the observer of a study found that science labs and demonstrations taught in inner-city schools in The United States could be fun for students, but they did not really grasp the educational concepts. The author tries to explain this limitation by saying that “…these [youth] face the challenge of integrating their identities in response to cultural conflicts that are constantly in flux” (Smardon, 2004, p.221). The situation I observed may explain the issue. These youth may have identity issues and may use humor as a way to cope with situations in which they are unsure of how to react. How can we as leaders help these youth feel more comfortable?

Without fully understanding one another and being receptive of those around them, it is hard to create a community-like feeling in order to speak to each other about issues. If individuals feel like as though issues are not serious, when real-life pressures arise they will be uncomfortable discussing it with others. Due to their lack of acknowledgment of these serious issues at hand, connections with their community will be difficult to establish. Through the routine activity theory lens, these youth become a ‘target’ for individuals who try to influence them into substance use and/or deviant behavior. They do not have the connection to the community that would otherwise help them through difficult situations. This decreases their community efficacy making them more susceptible to these outside factors.

At the end, it was pleasant to see that one individual was able to bring everyone back on track and the group was able to resolve the scenario given to them. They discussed the parts they played and how they could have dealt with the situation differently. Although this happened, there were still some students who were hostile
about talking about the situation and denied any part in it. If you are unable to see your role in a situation and how you can better a conflict resolution scenario, it is a roadblock to building collective action and community.

Table 3: Building Collective Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (p=.05)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong connection with the community</td>
<td>56% (.512)</td>
<td>69% (.479)</td>
<td>.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating of feeling of connectedness with community (1=poor-5=excellent)</td>
<td>2.06 (1.124)</td>
<td>2.37 (1.204)</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel comfortable to go to others if ever feel pressured</td>
<td>63% (.500)</td>
<td>94% (.250)</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is prevention and health talked about</td>
<td>69% (.479)</td>
<td>94% (.250)</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5: Knowledge Transfer

5.5.1: Quantitative Analysis

In the last section of the pre and post-tests, the questions revolve around knowledge transfer and its effect spreading awareness and recognizing sources that are reliable and those that are not. They also asked if youth speak up in a group setting and if they trust the information they receive from their peers. Table 4 provides the questions asked in this section and their results.

It is clear that youth felt more comfortable and confident after the twelve weeklong program to offer their opinions. This is an important tool in terms of knowledge transfer and in terms of the other three skills the program is trying to develop. If you have something to say it is important to speak up and make it clear that you have questions or concerns. Building this skill allows youth to feel confident in preventing their peers from heading down the wrong path (differential association theory) and by being educated and educating other youth are making themselves less of a target (routine activity theory).

When the youth were asked which sources they trust and if they trust their peers as a source of information, they made it clear that they trusted ‘others’ (in my opinion would be those working in the club), the Internet and social media. It also seemed as though there was no significant difference in the trust of information they received from their peers; they trusted them. The answers for which sources they trusted did not change, meaning these youth trusted the club members and their peers before as much as they did after. We are able to see this from day one because if the youth were not comfortable or trusting of the club staff they would never have approached them about the evident issues of substance use they were witnessing in their community. This also shows that there is community efficacy, as these youths wanted their peers to be safe from the precariousness of the neighborhood.

5.5.2: Qualitative Analysis

During my observations I examined constructive group work, which by the end of the day at the club, was seen seven times. As stated above, many traits and skills overlap with each other, so this observation can be overlapped with making decisions, resolving
conflicts and listening to others. I noticed that everyone was seated in a circle; this ensured that all the students would be interacting with one another and not get distracted by other factors. This creates a ‘homey’ feeling and is beneficial for group work and community building.

Table 4: Building Knowledge Transfer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (p=.05)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In groups do you offer your opinions (never=1, only when asked=2, before others=3)</td>
<td>2.33 (.617)</td>
<td>2.56 (.629)</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust of the information provided by peers</td>
<td>75% (.447)</td>
<td>63% (.500)</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6: Additional Observations

A story I would like to share from my experience at the club is quite surprising to me. During the conflict resolution workshop, an individual in the group jokingly made (gun) shot sounds when asked how the problem could be solved. This depicts that in low-income neighborhoods, youth are still displaying signs of violence mentality even if it is in a joking manner. It has become their local street/youth culture. It seems as though violence provides some kind of idiom to joke about or desensitize yourself from these issues. Maybe the student in this circle of youth felt as though he could behave in such a
manner, because they all come from similar cultures and would understand the idiom expressed. An outsider observer would deem this inappropriate, but experiences and cultures may differ in the sense of what we feel is appropriate and what is not. This, however, was troubling to observe because the club is known to be a safe haven for these youth. Such disrespectful behavior surprised me, but what was more surprising was that everyone was laughing as though this was acceptable. The concern lies in terms of transferability once again. It is unlikely that other individuals would think this is appropriate behavior and not a sign of violent mentality.

For an environment to be conducive to learning and growing, a facility must cater to that. The conditions of the facility in which I performed my observational visit astonished me. When I walked in it was clear that this facility was not properly maintained; the paint was chipping and there were leaks. In the kitchen area, it became clear that even the students were noticing the lack of resources and the issues with the institution. They complained about leaks from the tap, the sinks not being deep enough to wash their dishes, and in general the kitchen area was dirty and dusty. Next, we all moved towards an area where the group would start their sessions and they were surprised that they were not sharing a room with another group. There are clearly issues with space and availability if the youth are excited and surprised to have a room to themselves.

I must add that the condition of another facility I visited where The Boys and Girls Club runs was the total opposite of the school I just discussed. It is interesting to see how the esthetics of a facility depends largely on the geographic location. I believe that what you see and where you are daily impacts how much you take from that area. It is harder to want to do well and succeed when you are constantly in areas that are ‘broken’ and seen as ‘low’.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1: Summary of the Main Findings of the Survey Results

Overall, the survey results show few significant differences in the ways that the youth answered the pre and post survey questions. However, some questions did have
some significant differences. For example, in the peer mentorship section one question asked how the youth communicate difficult issues. There was a significant difference in this question where the youth understood by the end of the program answered face-to-face interactions is better than using technology when having to deal with difficult issues.

What is important to notice in all four of these sections and the results is the attitudinal shift these youths have undergone. The results of these sections have been able to connect with the theories important to programming aimed at decreasing deviance.

Routine activity theory can be used in all four sections to show that the program is trying to decrease the presence of suitable targets, the youth of this community, and to increase the presence and awareness of capable and willing guardians. The youth in this program are learning to be peer mentors and to understand who their peers are, how to become leaders and who to trust as a leader. With collectiveness and connectedness they are becoming less of a suitable target for those trying to recruit them and they are increasing their understanding of various topics and of whom to trust and not to trust. These various sections of the survey are just some points that the program tries to acknowledge and instill upon the youth. The youth are expanding their horizons and are helping others to do the same while understanding that there are people in the community who are always there for assistance and guidance.

Collective efficacy theory examines the level of connectedness and confidence individuals in a community possess to stand up for what is right. Again, all four sections paint a picture of increasing collective efficacy in one way or another. When youth did not feel as though they were bystanders or understood that being confident was important, it reinforces the fact that feeling connected with community causes one to take a stand. The same goes for leadership: a leader feels more confident and does not stand on the sidelines. Building a feeling of connectedness helps to reinforce the notion of community and makes it difficult for people to penetrate and youth become less of a target; connecting back to routine activity theory. All four sections illustrate an increase in feeling comfortable talking to peers and leading them, talking to others in their community and being confident enough to stand up before being asked to, to build efficacy amongst them all.

Differential association theory looks at peer group association both directly and indirectly. By building skills like peer mentorship, leadership, collective action and
knowledge transfer, the youth are equipped with the necessary tools to make the right choices. Those who are confident and stand up for what is right prevent indulgence in deviant behavior, and those who associate with them are less likely to associate with groups who place high importance on deviance. Being active and involved in a community creates an individual who has interests and passions outside of deviance. Being aware of what is “right” and “wrong” and knowing that there are approachable members of the community also prevents deviant behavior. This was all proved in the pre and post survey to be an increase. Youth felt more confident and were more active after allowing for better judgment and knowledge of who they should be associating with and if they ever felt pressured that they have people who are there for them.

6.2: Summary of the Main Findings of the Observational Site Visits

Using the pro-social skills checklist it was evident that like the survey pre and post questions and results, there were mixed results regarding if pro-social skills under the four sections were being developed. There were skills that were illustrated as being acquired but there were some behaviors that counteracted all the sessions and activities that were being used to enhance these skills. Overall, what I noticed was that there was a lot of encouraging, a lot of community building amongst the youth in the group. What surprised me however, was the lack of concern for what they were saying or their actions, and how it might be portrayed to others. This is where the issue of transferability is present. There were phrases and actions that were shocking from the perspective of an outsider, and if they did those actions outside of their little “community” it would be problematic. These youth definitely displayed potential because they did show growth, but their outer community culture was still attached to them. It becomes difficult and questionable if these youth would be able to transfer these skills they are learning if they are still in the same environment you are trying to change. This issue of transferability can be seen in the data as part of the pre and post surveys, and can only be answered by longitudinal studies.

6.3: Limitations:

One limitation of this thesis is that it uses secondary data. The directors at the club were hesitant to allow a third party individual to enter their facilities and conduct
interviews with their youth, although my protocol was approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics board. As a result, my data collection was limited to a pre and post survey conducted by the host organization. During those survey interviews I could not be present, and hence could not observe body language, ask follow up questions, or listen to respondent’s additional comments. Further, those data were derived from survey questions that were not tailored to my research questions. Another issue is that the survey measures tended to suffer from floor and ceiling effects, these that is, limits on the range of responses to the survey questions. If youth who initially answered questions ‘correctly’ they have nowhere further to go in the posttests. This can lead to a skewing of data.

Another limitation comes from the fact that the number of participants is very small. With 16 participants it is difficult to make any firm conclusions. For better results a larger number of participants would have been ideal. This program though did not begin not too long ago (summer of 2014) and thus was unlikely to have a larger number of participants up to date. This small “n” makes our results inconclusive. Therefore a larger group of individuals and even having a control group to differentiate and show a comparison through that lens would solidify the results greatly.

Lastly, this study is also not a longitudinal research study, and thus will not show us the effectiveness of the program down the road for these youth. What it will show us is the effectiveness of the program short-term, leaving an important piece of the puzzle out. Since little research of this kind has been conducted in Canada or internationally, I hope that more longitudinal research will be conducted in order to test whether attitudinal changes can lead to behavioral changes.

6.4: Implications

I believe my findings are inconclusive. They do not tell us definitively whether or not these skills that are being developed are preventing youth from substance use and deviant behavior. Relevant theories have not adequately addressed by these data. The data do suggest that there were some attitudinal changes, such as feeling more encouraged, feeling more connected to their peers and feeling more confident. These are all partial postulates of routine activity, collective efficacy and differential association.
theories, and allow us to see some of the picture, but a more holistic view has to be seen. A longitudinal study needs to be conducted to understand if these traits that are being attitudinally changed are also becoming behaviorally changed to really have an impact on these youth especially in terms of transferability.

Programs in other countries similarly lacked longitudinal and behavioral evaluations. What was also very similar in all cases and in the case of the Level Up program as well was that every program made sure that it was catered towards the needs of their communities. The Level Up program was designed out of the needs of the youth that brought the issue up and all the other international programs were devised to aid in the specific areas that the communities thought were important. In terms of community development and community based programming it is necessary that programming is specialized for your specific needs so it has the highest potential of success. The Level Up program in comparison to all the other programs discussed ranks the same as they do. These types of programs are now starting to be examined so the findings are relatively new and not longitudinal making the results inconclusive. More time, effort and attention needs to be placed on this important issue, as youth development through community programming is not just important but is a necessity.

Some programs internationally have shown whole community changes, focusing not solely on the youth, but rather on changing the mindset of the entire community. I believe, and research has clearly shown, that targeting youth is important, but for a lasting change and a change that affects the entire community, placing more emphasis on community development is also needed. The Boys and Girls Clubs out of Regent Park were discussing distributing this program to schools in the areas as an after school program in these facilities to capture more audience. I think this is a great idea. Allowing youth who are not part of the Boys and Girls community an opportunity to be a part of this programming is important. Although the results have been inconclusive, spreading these programs and allowing parents, teachers and others the opportunities to learn and grow through these types of programs are important. More community-based programming to bring about a more holistic change needs to be implemented to achieve real progress.
Bibliography:


City of Toronto. (2011). Demographics: Regent park [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=80ccb3d0122c1410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=1e68f40f9aae0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD.


http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/en/toronto-regent-park


## APPENDIX A

### SPONTANEOUS PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR (NOT TEACHER-DIRECTED)

The behaviors listed in parentMUS are only examples. Please write your own definition, or specific examples observed, on the lines provided.

Children in this class demonstrated to their peers:

<table>
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<th>Tb</th>
<th>les Seen (use bash maries)</th>
<th>Swns (Number)</th>
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1. **helpfulness** (gives help when asked, checks for understanding,...)

2. **cooperation** (getting along with others, listens and works with group,...)

3. **concern for another child’s feelings** (asks if someone wants a rum,...)

4. **leadership** (asks group to plan how to solve problems, keeps group focused,...)

5. **verbal support/encouragement** (offers praise, speaks,...)

6. **listening to mother’s views** (lets others speak, summarizes others’ thoughts,...)

7. **joint problem solving** (encourages brainstorming, follows SOLVED principles,...)

8. **compromise/conflict resolution** (compares views if there is a disagreement, how to work out problems,...)

9. **making decisions** (plans how to solve problem, lists pros and cons,...)

10. **constructive group work/behavior** (attends to group and task, screens out distractions, makes good use of time,...)

**TOTAL PROSOCIAL**