

Putting Research to Work for Families



Focus:
Civilian

“I Used to Be Wild:” Adolescent Perspectives on the Influence of Family, Peers, School, and Neighborhood on Positive Behavioral Transition

Animosa, L. H., Johnson, S. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2018). “I used to be wild:” Adolescent perspectives on the influence of family, peers, school, and neighborhood on positive behavioral transition. *Youth & Society*, 50(1), 49-74.
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SUMMARY: Youth who have behavior problems as adolescents often have positive behavior transitions as young adults. This study examined the experiences of Black young adults who reported such a transition in their behavior when they were youth. Findings underscore the importance of the contexts of support (e.g., families, peers, schools, and neighborhoods), both general and specific, to the behavior transition.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Families helped participants specifically develop career skills as well as generally were warm and had high expectations of participants. One participant who had a child cited the child as an influence to be better.
- Peers were either positive influences or participants distanced themselves from them.
- High schools provided preparedness for next steps, safety, and connectedness; participants also identified when schools did not contribute these benefits.
- Neighborhoods were mostly influential in that they prompted participants to escape from them toward better, safer neighborhoods.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS:

- Collaborate with professionals across a diversity of youth-serving agencies to facilitate positive behavior transitions with troubled youth
- Work with families to support warm, skill-building environments to improve positive relationships with youth

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM LEADERS:

- Engage parents of low-income youth in programs facilitating positive family, peer, school and neighborhood involvement
- Provide information to parents regarding how to contribute to positive behavior transitions at home

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS:

- Increase support for school programming that increases connectedness and skill-building for careers and future education
- Recommend partnerships between schools and youth-serving organizations to increase positive behavior supports in multiple settings

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METHODS

- Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews that were 32-75 minutes long (M = 50 minutes) and took place at the participants' pediatric primary care clinic.
- Interviewers used an interview guide and a life history calendar for participants who were asked to discuss past experiences.
- Interviews were transcribed by an independent company and coding was iterative and began during the interview process which allowed the researchers to change the interview guide as they continued.
- Two coders worked together, creating 74 codes and double-coding five random transcripts to ensure rigor.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 18 Black young adults ages 17-22 years (55.6% female) recruited from the control group of a larger intervention study; the 18 participants did not differ from the larger control group in demographics.
- Participants reported their mothers' level of education (77.8% at least high school) and rated themselves slightly lower than average in socioeconomic status.
- Most participants reported no involvement in measured risk behaviors (e.g., carrying a weapon, using alcohol) in the last 30 days.

LIMITATIONS

- A sample size of 18 participants makes it difficult to generalize results.
- Participants were those who sought and were able to obtain healthcare, which might make them different from those who do not, and results may not apply to that population.
- The researchers did not ask about other potentially positive influences such as spiritual or faith organizations, which could be a significant gap.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Examine how to increase school connectedness and investing in youth's ability to launch successfully into careers or further education
- Investigate how to increase ways families support positive behavioral transitions among children with histories of conduct problems
- Explore how families, peers, schools, and neighborhoods interact in the process of positive behavioral transitions

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

Design



Appropriate
Research Plan
and Sample

Methods



Excellent
Measurement
and Analysis

Limitations



Few

For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>