

Youth Development and Job Placement in Chelsea, MA

*Observing the Relationship between Assets, Intentionality, and Optimism
and Job Placement and Retention
in a program for Low-Income, High-Risk Youth*



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Project Report

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I. Community Needs Assessment

History and context

In the 1970's and 1980's, American companies faced a changing market and loosened regulations on their actions. Seeking higher profits and attempting to skirt strong labor unions in the United States, they disinvested from U.S. industry and other businesses starting in the 1970's and early 1980's. This disinvestment hit inner city communities in the 1980's; they lost many blue-collar jobs and plant closures in this period. Unemployment for inner-city males with limited education went from 19% to 50% between 1969 and 1987. In addition, in this period cities received a declining share of federal tax spending and lost its local tax base (Halpern, pp. 195-196) .

In addition, violence and political instability in Central America and Asia created huge influxes of immigrants. To absorb approximately 1.25 million immigrants annually, the United States needs to retain its high rate of economic productivity. But average workers haven't benefited from productivity increases; jobs are being drained especially from the inner cities from which industries have fled (Blakely, 2010).

Project Target Community

The target community for this entire project is the City of Chelsea and “the Shirley Avenue neighborhood” of Revere, Massachusetts which are both located in PUMA code 02900. The Dept. of Labor, the main funder for the project, required location within a PUMA code area which had a 15% or higher poverty rate. However, the youth that this study has targeted and tracked focus on the Chelsea youth population segment of this PUMA. See map, following.



Problem Analysis

In Chelsea, Massachusetts, these two major economic and demographic trends set the stage for a troubling situation with both employment and services for its youth population. The population of 18-24 year olds grew 18% from 2000 to 2009 alone, more than any other age group in the city except 55-64 year-olds (EASI Analytics Software, Inc., 2009). With the loss of blue-collar and manufacturing jobs forcing once-middle-class residents to take service sector jobs in the area, immigrant and youth workers were no longer able to get these service jobs for which they once might have qualified. The 42% of Chelsea youth living below the poverty level (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009), and 30% of the city's high school dropouts being unemployed (City of Chelsea, Massachusetts, 2005) are the stark realities created by the national problems of economic disinvestment and high rates of immigration.

Other effects of these problems includes ethnic tensions fueled by the waves of poor immigrants flowing into the city (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2009), the creation of youth gangs (Sachetti, 2009) , a high teen pregnancy rate (79 per thousand, significantly higher than the state average) (Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy, 2009) , and the highest high school dropout rate in the state (47%) all contributed to Chelsea having the highest crime rate and one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Massachusetts. See Table 1 which gives the data that demonstrates these trends.

Table 1: Chelsea Demographics and Population Changes, 2000-2009/2010

	2000	2009/2010 data	% Change
Growth of population ages 18-24 years old	3717	4387 (2009)	18%
Those with high school degrees	6558	6871	5%
Unemployed males	476	781(EASI Analytics, 1/1/2011)	64%
Unemployed females	553	1008	82%
Out of labor force males	5,586	3,312	-41%
Out of labor force females	6,662	6,077	9%
High school graduation rate	Not available	49.9% (2009) [2010 4-year adjustable rate = 59.4%]	Growth rate not available
Violent crime rate (#'s per 100,000)	1,425	1,871 (Federal Bureau of Investigations and the City of Chelsea, 2009)	31%
<i>Racial/ethnic</i>	<i>groups' growth:</i>		
Caucasian	20,328	17,165	-16.6%
African American	2,544	3,060	20%
Asian	1,678	1,129	-33%
Latino/Hispanic	16,984	22,469	32%

Could the market meet the training and job needs for the youth of Chelsea? Unfortunately, businesses have struggled to maintain their profit margins and do not have plans for expansion that could create jobs for Chelsea's youth. The most recent (2004) Community Development Plan reports that from 1999 – 2004, there was a “steady loss in manufacturing jobs after reaching a high point through the late 1990's.” (Federal Bureau of Investigations and the City of Chelsea, 2009) See the following table:

Table 2: Employment Trends in Chelsea, Massachusetts 2001-2011 (EASI Analytics Software, Inc., 2011)

Sector	Percent of employed population working in this sector in 2001:	Percent of employed population working in this sector in early 2011:	% change (+ or -)
Services	20%	33%	+13%
Construction	3%	6.4%	+3.4%
Manufacturing	11%	13.2%	+2.2%
Trade	26%	26.2%	+.2%
FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate)	3%	7.6%	+4.6%

The clearest trends shown by these data are the rise in the percentage of workers in the service field, and the small number of people employed in the construction sector: trends that have been clear across the state and the nation in the past 10 or 20 years. The recession of 2008-2010 was sure to increase this trend and most likely, force some of the less lucky blue- or white-collar workers into lower-paying service jobs when many manufacturing, banking and finance, construction, and other jobs were lost or still low. And clearly, youth were not first in line for any of the jobs available. An estimated 1800 youth ages 16-24 were unemployed as of early 2009 (Just-A-Start, Inc., 2009) and the youth poverty rate was 42% as of early 2011 (W.K. Kellogg Corporation, 2009).

Chelsea's problem is a microcosm of a national problem that has persisted over the past decades: that people of color and low-income people have difficulty accessing

skilled jobs that pay a living wage and supply benefits; and during economic downturns they fare worse than white people. Seeds of this discrimination were sown as early as the 1930's, when the newly-formed National Labor Relations Act of 1935 was passed to protect industrial workers' rights to organize unions and bargain collectively. Although this Act benefited workers overall, it was called the "Negro Removal Act" by some African Americans who saw it as legitimizing whites-only unions because of the bias of some of the provisions of the Act. (Lui, 2006, pp. 253-254) In the recession of 1973-74, at the beginning of the trend of deindustrialization that has continued to the present day, 60-70 percent of the laid-off workers were African American in places where they were only 10-12 percent of the workforce. (Lui, 2006, p. 259) As of 2006 African Americans made up one-ninth of the workforce but held one-seventh of low-wage jobs; while white Americans made up almost seven-tenths of the workforce but held fewer than six-tenths of the low-wage jobs. (Lui, 2006, p. 120)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' data from 2009 shows the racial breakdown of workers in different occupations: (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009 Household Data Annual Averages, 2009)

Table 3: Racial and Ethnic Group Breakdown of 3 Main Industrial Groups, 2009¹

Ethnic/Racial Group and its percentage of the U.S. Population estimated as of 2006-2009: (2006-2009 American Community Survey, 2006-2009)	Black or African Americans (12.3%)	Asian (4.4%)	Latino or Hispanic (15.1%)	White or Caucasian, (plus American Indian, Native Alaskan and other) (83.2%)
Management, professional and related occupations	10.7%	4.7%	14%	70.6%
Service Occupations	15.4%	4.6%	20.6%	59.4%
Food Preparation	11.4%	5.4%	21.6%	61.6%

Thus there is a tendency for white Americans to hold higher-paid management and professional jobs and people of color to hold lower-paid, service jobs.

For Latinos, the impediments to education, such as language barriers and immigration status, have led to difficulty getting training and a living wage job; therefore many Latino workers have been unable to climb the ladder to higher wages and more stable employment. Latino's have the lowest rate of bachelor's degrees attainment compared to other major ethnic groups in the United States. In addition, public sector jobs are the most likely to be unionized, but many Latino's – especially recent immigrants, as are many people in Chelsea – cannot access these jobs because of their non-citizen status or the perception that their status is illegal.

Even when people of color are employed, they earn less than their white counterparts. In a 2007 study by the Urban Institute, it was found that the average hourly wage of newly hired white workers in jobs that did not require a college education was \$13.08 – significantly below a living wage. But newly hired Black workers in the same jobs averaged even less, only \$10.23, and newly hired Latino workers averaged \$11.46 an hour. (United for a Fair Economy, 2010, p. 5)

Overall, people of color face hurdles that their white counterparts do not face when looking toward a career or looking to earn a living wage. The youth of Chelsea are just one example of this national problem.

¹ This is a five-year Survey so it is the most updated possible as of 2011

Problem Identification and Setting of Project Goals; General Introduction to the Project

How can community economic development positively impact a subsector of youth in a city caught in the crossfire of deindustrialization, immigration, under-funded and insufficient educational system, and racially-biased hiring practices, and recessionary conditions? Community Development Corporations have only had modest success with job creation; creating one job costs approximately \$15,000. Entrepreneurship is difficult without holistic development in the community. (Halpern, 1995, p. 140ff) And the social service agencies that existed could address just some of the challenges the diverse and growing Chelsea youth population brought to them, but tended to “service” the poor as opposed to aiding them on the path to self-sufficiency and political and personal empowerment.

The influx of stimulus funding from the Obama Administration set up a special opportunity to create new paths to self-sufficiency and new experiences with career-path jobs for youth of color and youth at risk who would historically not have the opportunity to take these paths. Using Pathways Out of Poverty (Department of Labor stimulus) funding, selected nonprofits and government entities have been funded and tasked with empowering low-income and out-of-work individuals be trained, and placed in jobs, in “green industries” – a set of industries and careers that are new to the U.S. economy. Roca was lucky to be one of these grantees.

The goals of one program of Roca’s under this grant -- running a comprehensive training and job placement program for a large group of very high risk youth—are:

- (A) At least 75% of these youth trainees (who complete the program) gain 1 skill certificate, and
- (B) At least 60% of these completers earn 2 or more certificates.

(Certificates are a high priority tool in the workforce and skill development field, especially for citizens who are striving to increase their employability level. Especially in an economy where a post-secondary degree or even a master’s degree is barely sufficient for attaining a living-wage job, a certificate is an important value-added tool to boost a job-seeker’s chances in the world of work.)

Key to the success of this project is the careful and slow development of graduated steps for the youth, and the reasonable goals set for each at-risk youth. Note that the logic model assumes that it is reasonable to expect that with careful preparation 131 of the 175 youth will obtain certificates after completing transitional employment experiences; and that only 105 of the 175 will go on to add another certificate to their resume.

In addition, Roca’s documented experience in training at-risk youth positions them well to stick with the youth in spite of at-risk youth’s proclivity to fail at such an ambitious goal. Each youth is assigned to a caseworker who can set an individualized progress plan for him or her. The caseworker assigns the youth to the next reasonable step and assures success before moving them on to the next level of training and work. For example, once a student completes his or her GED,

the caseworker might move them on to having a part-time supervised job; once that experience is successfully mastered, the youth might be moved on to attaining a skill certificate and then on to a part-time unsupervised job.

Caseworkers have only 25 clients each so that they may focus sufficiently on the challenges of each youth.

Finally, partnerships have been developed and funded to assist in pieces of the project. Partnerships are:

Partner	Purpose
JFY (Jobs for Youth)	Provide training and curriculum for youth for certificates related to green building work (and possible de-construction)
New England Regional Carpenters Union	Provide training in carpentry-related skills, and to provide temporary training positions and possibly long-term job placements.
Mass. Lift	Forklift training and certification
American Red Cross	Healthcare training and certification
North Shore Community College	Cosmetology training and certification; culinary arts
Suffolk Building Services (a green cleaning business)	Cleaning

These partnerships doing higher-level training and certifications leaves Roca to do what they do best, which is to provide the organizational support and case management expertise, with a focus on retaining the youth in the program, guiding their personal development, and coordinating their professional development: ultimately supporting these youth to make the most progress possible.

Logic Model: (1) Large High-Risk Group and (2) Small Select YouthStar Group

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes:		
				<i>Short-term</i>	<i>Medium-term</i>	<i>Long-term</i>
GROUP ONE:						
Low-income youth drop out of school and lack education, credentials, skills, income, purposeful work; pose risk to society through crime and dangerous behavior	Training dollars through federal request match. Partners providing credentialing training, and job placement options.	Pre-vocational programming; certification programs; part-time subsidized work placements; life skills work	175 high-risk youth engage in and complete pre-voc. training and most (110) students in work crews into short-term unsubsidized employment.	75% of these completers (131) attain industry-recognized certifications; at least 60% (105) gain 2 or more credentials at least 65% (114) get placed in jobs or post-secondary school	Youth have more access to jobs requiring credentials	Reduction in class and ethnic disparities, gang problems, and other problems in Chelsea, because of lower youth unemployment rate
GROUP TWO: YOUTHSTAR:						
Ditto above	Ditto above	Ditto above except they had already gotten through basic life-skills training and some pre-voc training before starting YouthStar	27 mostly high-risk youth engage in advanced vocational training and more lifeskills- and credentialing- training	75% of completers (20) attain 1 industry-recognized certification; at least 60% (16) gain 2 or more credentials at least 65% (18) get placed in jobs or post-secondary school	Ditto; plus: At-risk youth retained for more than 6 months in Chelsea businesses	Ditto; plus: Chelsea-area businesses see at-risk youth as employment resources instead of liabilities for the city

Explanation of the Logic Model:

The Logic Model flows from the problem that low-income youth in Chelsea drop out of school and lack education, credentials, skills, income and purposeful work when they do. The inputs to the project include training dollars, appropriate staff trained in credentialing curriculum, and the development of partnerships for this youth training and subsidized work placement (see partnerships listed above). The students can choose, with guidance from the youth workers, which certificates to try to attain, and which career paths to pursue through subsidized work in work crews. Some work crew options include employment in small, green businesses; others include placement in jobs do not include those features. One important program design element is that only students who have passed through Roca's Transitional Job "Phase II" (which includes holding on to a transitional job for 6 months) may be eligible to be placed in a permanent, outside job placement (Phase III).

Activities taken to put students on a training/career path include: basic and life skills education; training in business development and financial management (personal and business finance); creation of work crew contracts; pre-vocational programming; certification programs; subsidized work placements.

Outputs (measurable results) for the large group of high-risk youth are:

- (1) Enroll approximately² 225 participants in pre-vocational, and/or advanced transitional employment, training, with 175 actually engaging in and completing pre-vocational training (i.e. there will be approximately 50 dropouts or terminations)
- (2) Putting approximately 110 students in work crews into short-term (10-month) unsubsidized employment as transitional employment training.

Table 4: Some typical certificates and related jobs placements

Certificate	Possible job placement
Accounting	Office job
Fork lift	Construction
CPR	Entry level hospital position
Cosmetology	Hair or beauty salon
Computer skills	Office or data entry work

² I say "approximately" because the 450+ youth who engage in programs at Roca each have specialized, individualized development programs that may go in different directions. So the goal was set to aim for a reasonable and typical number of youth out of the 450+ Roca enrollees who might need pre-vocational training and move on to advanced transitional employment training.

Short-term outcomes are approximately 75% of completers (131) gaining one industry-recognized certificate, with approximately 60% (105) of these gaining an additional certificate) can be measurable by examining caseworker records of all 175 enrolled youth. In addition, at least 65% (or 114 individuals) will get placed in jobs or post-secondary school.

Medium-term outcomes (youth have more access to jobs requiring credentials) will be able to be reflected on, although not fully evaluated since the youth are still young and their use of the training and their new credentials may only come in the longer-term. Long-term outcomes (reduction in class and ethnic disparities, gang problems, etc. in Chelsea) would have to be measured in the much longer-term, beyond the scope of this two-year project.

Second Group Goals :

The second set of goals involves working with a smaller group of youth to see if intensified guidance around job placement, and certification training, results in better job placement, longer job retention, and/or higher wages. A group of 27 “Youth Star” youth were selected to receive training, work experience, and career guidance; they will have the same options that the larger 200+ person group have but receive more guidance and be in a peer group of youth who have moved beyond the basic “trust-building” stage. They also had already finished Roca’s “Key Training” –basic life skills and pre-employment training – before entering the YouthStar group. This group will be surveyed three times during their year-long program; the surveys will assess their aspirations and intentions around career, training, and future; their attitudes toward helping others and awareness of social needs including “green” or environmental concerns; and, finally, their optimism about their future and their chances of getting and keeping a good job. Their regular meetings with youth workers will emphasize career and future. Besides assessing the importance of intentionality and green or social justice-related careers in job placement and retention, the surveys will enable us to observe the relationship between success or failure with achievement of skill certificates, previous assets or experience, and other demographic and historic information retrieved through the intake form or quarterly assessments.

While we were not able to administer the same surveys to the larger group of 175 so as to observe the same relationship between success and failure with achievement of certificates, previous assets or experience, and other demographic information, we obtained the basic certificate and job placement information for the larger group so that we can compare the job placement and skill certificate outcomes with the smaller group, mostly for perspective on the benefits of working with a smaller group more intensively.

Thus, this second section of the logic model looks at whether the difficulty low-income, young people of color have getting and retaining career-trajectory jobs with living wages and benefits can be changed through a federally-funded job creation program preceded by a carefully-managed transitional employment program, with a focus on transition (subsidized) employment including in

green businesses; strong intentionality around career placement; and a smaller, more focused peer group. It also looks at the comparative effect of optimism and strong family support. In other words, how much effect does the strong program components have, as compared with in-born or family-nourished traits of optimism and support for success, on job placement in a chosen career?

Implementation Plan

Phase One: <i>Training and Placements for large block of Roca Youth</i>			
	Start Date	End Date	Outcomes of Activity
1. Pre-vocational programming for large group of 175 high-risk youth	Feb. 2010	Nov. 2010	Largest trainee group is prepared in pre-employment skills
2. Skill and certificate training for any of the large group who are ready	June 2010	September 2011	Prepare subset of trainees for work experience and job placement.
3. Advanced transitional employment placements for any of the above who are ready (goal: 50%)	November 2010	September 2011	More preparation for subset of trainees.
Phase Two: <i>Intentionality and social relevance experiments with small Youth Star</i>			
1. Start Youth Star group of 27 with skill and certificate training	Oct. 4, 2010	Varies, may take up to a year	Small, select group with higher aptitude and readiness
2. Intake surveys and quarterly assessments for all Youth Star students	Oct. 4, 2010 intake; 2 other surveys (February and August, 2011)	Oct. 2011 all assessments should be completed	Get info on assets, intentionality, interest in social relevance, and demographics of all Youth Star youth
3. Assessment/research: analyze all data points; analyze results and short-term outcomes.	June 2011	September 2011	Assess outcomes and observe relationship between assets etc. with job placement and retention.

Monitoring

Monitoring the program can be done through following the Implementation GANTT Chart and noting whether items have been started and completed on time. The logic models may also be used to see if inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes have been implemented or achieved.

Data collection can be aggregated before the end of the project to assess how participants are doing and to ensure that the target number of participants is involved at various stages. Specifically, the *major* benchmarks were:

1. Businesses for work crew trainings and work placements to be chosen by August, 2010
2. Basic transitional employment for all 200+ participants to be completed by June, 2011. Begin students who were ready in advanced transitional employment and certification training in July 2010 (this cycle was to continue for over a year, as students became ready to go through the trainings).
3. Youth Star cohort were to begin their year-long cycle October 4, 2010; intake information and trimester surveys administered.
4. Students who had completed the basic transitional employment phase and were ready for advanced transitional employment, who entered the program between Oct. 4, 2010 and February 1, 2011 were to be administered the same intake information, for comparison purposes.
5. Any beginning students who were ready with academic and soft skill training were to get started on advanced transitional employment.
6. Unsubsidized employment placements for graduates of either the large group or the Youth Star group were to begin late winter or spring 2011.
7. Student outcome data were to be reviewed and compared for both large and small Youth Star group.

Monitoring:

Certification Attainment and Job Placement Goals:

1. Did the large group of Roca students meet the certificate attainment and job placement goals as outlined in the Logic Model?
2. Similarly, did the YouthStar students meet their goals?
3. Which group had better outcomes? How much difference does it seem to make to have a smaller group with special attention and added services?

Research and observation goals:

1. How attracted are highly at-risk youth to career-track jobs, as opposed to service sector or other non-career-track jobs?
2. How important is *intentionality* to job placement and retention? In other words, if a youth expresses clear intent about job, training, and/or career goals, and gets support to follow up in these intentions, does this intentionality seem to correlate with successful job placement and retention?
3. Similarly, how important is *optimism* to job placement and retention?
4. In a similar vein, what seems to be the effect of a participant's ambition to help others or choose a career that is dedicated to social justice? Does it seem to correlate with higher job placement?
5. What are the correlations between job placement and retention, and certain other factors including acquisition of skill certificates, previous assets or experiences, certain demographic characteristics, and acquisition of GED's or high school diplomas? While the sample size is too small to do accurate statistical tests, what do we observe in this test group?

Evaluation

Evaluation will constitute an effort to assess the value of the Youth Development and Job Placement Project and what impact it had on its stakeholders, primarily the young adults of Chelsea; and to learn about what worked and what didn't work in the project.

The first research question that this evaluation should answer is whether the Youth Development and Job Placement Project was able to help at least 131 low-income youth in Chelsea MA acquire one skill certificate, and at least 105 youth acquire at least one *additional* skill certificate. The "micro" data that will test this question in the short-term (the two-year length of this study) are data on three primary elements of the study:

- A) *How many students from the larger youth group acquire skills certificates, and how many are placed in jobs?*
- B) *How many students from the smaller Youth Star group acquire skill certificates, and how many are placed in jobs? How many of these jobs match the participants' dreams and career aspirations?*
- C) *By looking at the YouthStar subgroup in great detail, can we tell if the elements of this intensified casework enhance at-risk youth's chances of attaining a career-track job? Or if any previous assets, experiences, or demographics correlate with successful job placement or retention?*

If the study were extended by another 6-12 months, we would also ask:

Can the youth in the YouthStar group retain these jobs for 6 months or more?

Literature Review

Literature on Workforce Development in General

The field of workforce development does not traditionally address the needs of high-risk youth. Basic workforce development literature addresses the need for skill assessment, labor market research on the most thriving job markets by region, and the need for the acquisition of appropriate skill certificates and apprenticeships. These are all basic elements that can and should be applied to job placement and retention work with at-risk youth; but in and of themselves they are not sufficient because they leave out the special needs that this sub-population bring with them.

There is a body of literature by progressive think tanks that applies to low-income workers in general but not specifically to low-income youth, focusing on sectoral strategies: that is, having a consortium of agencies, nonprofits, individuals, and governmental bodies cooperate to develop jobs in promising sectors, and encouraging and training low-income workers to prepare for and settle into those jobs. (Conway, 2007) This is now a well-researched and well-respected field of study and practice and is not irrelevant to this Roca Green Business Development and Youth Job Placement Project. However, it is not the focus of this study; instead, we are focusing on the highly specialized field of youth development, and trying to understand more of the nuances of what works and what doesn't work with at-risk youth job placement and retention.

The study of and research on how to prepare high-risk youth, ages approximately 16-26, who have not attached to the labor market is a specialized field and draws on the practice of several leaders in the work over the last 30 years in the United States.

At-risk Youth Workforce Development Starts with Effective Intervention Work

This project requires an understanding of both youth intervention for an at-risk population and workforce development for this population. Basic intervention work is a prerequisite for job placement and retention work, since most at-risk youth are not at all ready for the world of work; they have suffered neglect and sometimes abuse, have specialized learning needs, and are not equipped with the same basic educational tools and experiences that most non-risk adults have, such as a high school diploma, experience with a close-knit family that supports their achievement, good schooling that nurtures their dreams of the future as well as their path toward that future.

Several pieces of literature support and explain the youth work approach to be used in this project. Roca Youth Workers and Department of Youth Service officials published a booklet in August 2009 titled **“Intervention Work with High Risk Young People: Foundational Elements, Guiding Principles, Ideas, and Questions for Discussion.”** (Crime and Justice Institute, 2006) In it they state that any effective youth intervention work must include the following four guiding principles to be successful: (1) involvement of organizations that care about young people and believe they can change; (2) targeted and based on data; (3) individualized, intentional and focused on outcomes, and (4) long term. They believe that the core elements of intervention work are: (1) Outreach and

Youth Work – developing positive, constructive, long-term relationships with a purpose; (2) Programming; (3) Organizational Partnerships; (4) Suppression; and (5) Family and Community involvement. It ends with a list of indicators of success, some of which are included in the project evaluation.

In keeping with these guiding principles, our project includes tight programming, partnerships with businesses and agencies that can support several dimensions of the project, and community involvement. We will also use data gathering and analysis to evaluate the outcomes, and hopefully to assess the results mid-project to see if anything needs to be altered to improve results.

Another piece of literature on the youth work approach was written by the Crime and Justice Institute, **“Interventions for High-Risk Youth: Applying Evidence-Based Theory and Practice to the Work of Roca.”** (Crime and Justice Institute, 2006) This piece reviews theory and practice in research in criminal and juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, and behavior change for at-risk youth. Roca’s core strategies include outreach and street work, how to intervene with gang-involved and immigrant youth; young parents; and school dropouts. In addition, the “lynchpin of Roca’s work is the development of ‘transformational relationships’ between a young person and a designated youth worker.” A “Stages of Change” figure illustrates their theory. Finally, they list the “eight guiding principles for reducing risk and recidivism” in at-risk youth.

Most relevant to our research and project design is the validation of the need to do more than just offer educational and vocational programming to dropout youth; the latter need “prosocial skills training,” intensive counseling and mentoring; leadership; strict behavioral requirements; and more.

Our work will include elements from the later stages of this youth work; in other words, the YouthStar youth will already have been recruited from the streets and taken through orientation into the Roca program. The elements most relevant to our work will be the continued “prosocial skills training,” counseling, mentoring, and connecting the students with employers and other “engaged institutions” that they will see as their supports and lines to entering the world of work. (Hunter, 2006)

This standard of the need to work with at-risk youth on social skills, general life competencies, and the like is now echoed by more mainstream and governmental organizations – not just specialty organizations such as Roca or YouthBuild. The WIA (Workforce Investment Act) program, which replaced JTPA and before that CETA as the federal workforce development program, has a component focusing on youth/young adult workforce development which “reflects the developmental needs of youth.” (David E. Brown and Thakur, 2006) Fastidious work starting in the 1990’s by many non-profits dedicated to helping at-risk youth contributed to the “PEPNet principles:” those “Promising and Effective Practices” that defied the once-popular notion that “nothing works” with this population. PEPNet’s work, among other things, contributed to some of these principles being espoused by the federal government and other mainstream agencies. In 2008, the Center for American Progress, a think-tank with advisors with close ties to the Obama

administration, issued recommendations for action around the dropout crisis and job creation for youth that included holistic programming for at-risk youth, as well as many other policy recommendations. (Linda Harris and Ganzglass, *Creating Postsecondary Pathways to Good Jobs for Young High School Dropouts*, 2008) The Center on Law and Social Policy in Washington DC has recently documented examples of effective practice in the field of youth employment in their February 2010 piece titled **“Building a Comprehensive Youth Employment Delivery System.”** (Hastings, 2010) In this detailed study of effective practices in a half dozen cities, Boston is featured. The strength of the elements of youth workforce development in Boston must spill over into Chelsea as a next door neighbor to Boston.

The Nuances of At-Risk Job Placement: Looking into Intentionality

One of the most important foci of the Roca Youth Development and Job Placement project is the element of looking at the correlation between “intentionality” toward certain career paths and the job placement and retention rate. In other words, when a young person has a passion for something, or a strong intention to enter into a certain skill area or career field, does this intentionality or interest correlate with higher job placement or retention? The Center for American Progress’ article **Creating Postsecondary Pathways to Good Jobs for Young High School Dropouts** (October 2008) (Linda Harris and Ganzglass, 2008, p. 4) makes important points related to this: (1) that income and class makes more difference in a young person’s ability to obtain a high school diploma than does race or ethnicity; and (2) very few dropouts who earn a GED and then enroll in college end up getting a college diploma. Therefore college completion is a very challenging goal for programs like Roca or YouthBuild, albeit an important one. The CAP article also cites a CLASP study from 2006 that found that dropouts have significant postsecondary and career aspirations. The authors make the point that therefore it is important not to write them off but steer them into training and careers that take advantage of those aspirations and attempt to get them into related careers.

I have learned a lot from YouthBuild’s success with at-risk youth. (YouthBuild USA, 1996) While its philosophy is similar to Roca’s as expressed in the above two pieces, a focus that is unique to YouthBuild is the “mini-community” that is created with a group of YouthBuild trainees for their year of construction training, building affordable housing, and studying for their GED or high school diploma. YouthBuild’s claim is that the sense of family or community is critical to the success of the young person, often replicating the support of family that the troubled youth didn’t receive in their family of origin. The YouthBuild model also asserts that the act of rebuilding low-income housing is central to the development of the troubled youth as a “leader.” YouthBuild trainers and practitioners assert, either by inference or directly, that the social relevance of building affordable housing and making the world a better place is central to the effectiveness of youth development in a YouthBuild program. It can be easily accepted that social relevance helps build leaders. However, the question still remains: does the social relevance of the job training or job aspiration correlate with higher job placement or job retention?

This question of social-responsibility element and its role in job placement will be tested in the Roca Youth Development project. Our quarterly assessment will attempt to test for this by asking the question: “I would prefer to have a job that is helping others or making the world a better place.” (There will also be follow-up questions to this effect in the other 3 quarterly surveys; and the final correlation outcome data research will correlate success in job placement with interest in social responsibility.)

In sum, it seems that there is no literature on whether interest in social justice or taking social responsibility correlates with job placement or retention, beyond YouthBuild literature. The research we are doing on the YouthStar group attempts to begin to fill this gap in the field’s body of research and knowledge.

A note on methodology: it is important that this project uses research techniques that accurately compare the Youth Star and the non-Youth Star group. The two groups may have different demographics and experiences that should be taken into account when they and their outcomes after the program (i.e. certifications gained, job placement attained, attitudes changed) are compared. For example, if 75% of the Youth Star group has GED’s or high school diplomas before starting the program but only 25% of the other non-Youth Star group has them, this should be noted in the results. The importance of careful research methods is reviewed thoroughly in the article **“Benchmarking Roca Transitional Employment Program”** by David E.K. Hunter, PhD. (Hunter D. E., 2008)

Finally, I feel compelled to insert a note on the relationship between job placement and the current economic climate in the United States. I have worked for almost two decades in the field of youth development and placement, and it is always a struggle to place at-risk youth in any jobs, much less career-track jobs. However, job placement outcomes in YouthBuild programs have been going down over the past three years, and I don’t believe that this is a result of declining quality of our work, or even the growing rejection by prospective employers of at-risk or minority youth for positions available. I think a good part of it has simply to do with the global economic crisis and the lack of available jobs in the United States. Even middle class people with decent training or re-training are struggling to find employment. (Goodman, 2010) While youth development and workforce development practitioners should be rigorous about their methodologies and always seek to better their standards and outcomes, the recession must be accepted as a factor in job placement rates, and drops in outcomes must be expected, during recessionary times.

Literature on Green Jobs for Low-Income Job-Seekers

This project was designed to test the theory that getting credentials in the green jobs sectors is, overall, both possible and beneficial for low-income, young job seekers who want and need help entering career-track jobs. What does the literature say about this theory? Another question that the project is seeking to understand, and that various social scientists, journalists, and activists have

theorized about, is: *which area* of green jobs holds the most potential for this population? This would refer both to the amount of money youth could make, and the long-term potential a career could hold.

Several writers make the case for green jobs in general as excellent avenues for low-income, unskilled job seekers to follow. Dr. Raquel Pinderhughes, professor at San Francisco State University, defines green jobs as “blue collar jobs whose products and services improve environmental quality”. (Raquel Pinderhughes, 2007, p. 3) She goes on to claim that green jobs have relatively high pay, job mobility, stable ownership, and job satisfaction on the one hand, and require relatively easy-to-obtain certifications to qualify people to do the work, on the other hand; and therefore concludes that low income people are well-suited to fill these positions as green sectors expand in the American economy.

Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. echo part of this argument by saying that very little new training needs to be developed, since green industry is mostly made up of traditional industry skills – i.e. carpentry, caulking, engineering, etc. Their booklet “**How to Prepare Jobseekers for the Green Economy**” (Economic Modeling Specialists, 2009) lists trends, earnings, and training requirements for all construction-related occupations that should be affected by green projects. The research verifies that certification in skills for carpentry, carpenter’s helpers, and other less advanced elements of the construction industry is easily available or is usually done on the job; and that wages average \$18-20 per hour in these jobs. Our project is making use of the ease-of-training factor that EMSI discusses by choosing basic green construction, and green cleaning as industries that high-risk, hard-to-employ young people can most easily obtain the skills for and access.

The EMSI report concludes by stressing the importance of “doing something new” given the recession, since “recessions free up labor and resources which are then reapplied in new and more effective ways.” Roca’s creation of new green jobs small businesses would be an example of the entrepreneurship they are encouraging; the results of the Roca project will be one small test case for the EMSI theory.

Would green jobs hold hope for long-term employment for low-income young people from the Boston/Chelsea area? This question is addressed by the US Conference of Mayors’ booklet “**U.S. Metro Economies: Current and Potential Green Jobs in U.S. Economy.**” (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2008) (June 2008, US Conference of Mayors). This piece projects the specific number of jobs to be created for 30 years into the future, by major metropolitan region. For the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy area, they estimate that in 2006 there were 19,799 green jobs, and that by 2038 there will be 156,660 in total. This metro region ranks 5th in their list of 100 metro regions in the country for growth in green jobs. So this would be a very positive assessment of the potential of green industries for our students’ careers. Their analysis includes an assessment of the most fertile sub-industries. The researchers break the jobs down into the major categories of: renewable power generation, agriculture and forestry; construction and systems installation; manufacturing; equipment dealers and wholesalers; engineering, legal, research and consulting; and government administration. [the engineering etc. contained the most jobs in 2006 by a factor of almost 4; next was renewable

power generation.] They also note the growth in the different types of power generation: wind is the fastest-growing; followed by solar. The researchers also estimate the increase in energy efficiency of buildings over the next 30 years, and from there calculate the number of jobs to be created in that change: “approximately 36,000 in the residential sector and 45,000 in commercial.” (p. 15) Their conclusion is that as of 2008 the country was headed for a “new era” in energy policy and that both governments and private markets are gearing up for “massive investments” in new alternative fuel technologies and in increased energy efficiency; also, the jobs are not location-specific so that jobs and industries can be located in the areas that make the most sense and for the best business growth.

If their projections are correct, job growth should not just continue in higher-end jobs such as engineering, legal and consulting, but also in energy-efficiency retrofitting and building and basic weatherization – jobs that are accessible and likely starting points for low-income workers. The EMSI projections for the next few years indicate slow growth in these sub-industries; however the longer-term projections are much better. The Roca project’s very long-term outcomes will test these authors’ theories.

One more study that comments on the potential of the Roca project is the **YouthBuild USA: Network Scan and Business Case Studies**. (YouthBuild USA, 2009) This business scan, researched and written by a consultant for YouthBuild USA, reviews twelve YouthBuild programs across the United States that are trying to raise revenue from the provision of products or services from green businesses. It comments on basic information about the business structure, the history of the business, the current status of the business, how many YouthBuild students have been involved, the future of the business, and more. It would be very valuable to have an update on some of these case studies, to get even more data on how the businesses are doing. There are many conclusions that could be drawn or discussed from this Scan, but the most relevant are:

- In a New England organization, a deconstruction business is resulting in a net loss and the Building Materials Re-use Center is resulting in a net gain. The parent organization, ReSource of Burlington VT, “recognizes that it could not have done any of its new work without financial support, and emphasizes that capital continues to be a struggle, even with a donated space.”
- A grounds maintenance business built under a California YouthBuild nonprofit is thriving mostly because of contracts with the City of Fresno. The lesson here is that good business strategy, luck and connections can set the stage for a successful green business and excellent job experience for low-income youth.
- Another California YouthBuild program grew their YouthBuild program into a repair and maintenance handyman company, and then grew that into a profitable green maintenance and handyman company. They did not have to raise any capital to implement these initiatives which are profitable. In this business as well, contracts with two surrounding cities were helpful in improving chances of the profitability of the business.

- The New Bedford, MA YouthBuild program has begun planning a weatherization and handyman service business. Their funding comes from the state Department of Education YouthBuild line item; from the National and Community Service; from their parent agency, a multi-service anti-poverty agency (PACE, Inc.), and from private foundations.

The main lessons from this business scan of YouthBuild programs attempting small businesses in green industries are: (1) contracts with city or state agencies help enormously in keeping a business in the black; (2) raising capital for a business is very difficult and shouldn't be relied on; (3) a weatherization business is difficult unless it comes through a funded stream – i.e. the CAP agency federal contract on weatherization.

Results of Observation of Final Data:

Observations from placement data:

I. Data Analysis on certificate acquisition:

Large Group of Roca High-Risk Participants:

Of the 175 in this group who were engaged in Pre-Vocational programming, 60% (105) ended up attaining an industry-recognized certification.

59% (103) attained 2 or more industry-recognized certifications.

Small YouthStar Participants:

Of the 27 originally enrolled participants in the smaller YouthStar group, 16 (59%) were either still studying for their GED at Roca, or in college, or had retained employment.

74% of enrollees³ (20) had achieved at least one industry-recognized certification

63% of enrollees (17) achieved two or three of these certifications.

Therefore, comparing these data to the Logic Model, or goals of the program, we see these results:

- The large group fell short of the certification-attainment goal by 15% (or 26 participants)
- The large group fell short of the dual-certification-attainment goal by 1% (or 2 participants)
- The small YouthStar group fell short of the single-certification-attainment goal by just 1% (or 2 youth)
- The small YouthStar group surpassed the double-certification-attainment goal by 3% (or 3 participants)

The YouthStar group clearly had better certification outcomes than the full group.

³ Note that it is critical whether we are measuring percentage of enrollees or percentage of completers in this data analysis. Of the 27 originally-enrolled YouthStar group, 3 “dropped out” and had no certificates earned. These final statistics include these 3. If we had not included them, the group program would have surpassed their certification-attainment goals. Including them in the denominator pushed the final attainment lower.

II. Data on employment:

Large Group of Roca High-Risk Participants:

Of the 175 in this group who were engaged in Pre-Vocational programming, 55% (97) were employed or in college at the end of the program, at an average wage of \$8.65/hour.

YouthStar Group:

Of the 27 enrollees in YouthStar, 3 were terminated early therefore didn't have successful placement at the end of the program. Only 3 others were not either working, continuing with their GED study and skills work at Roca, or in college at the end of the YouthStar year. So we could say that 78% of the group was successfully "placed" (if you count as "placement" continuing on at Roca with GED and skills study), and 59% were successfully graduated into either employment or college. The average wage at job placement was \$10.61 an hour.

III. There are 15 participants with high optimism.

7 of these also had high intentionality/consistency.

Of these 7, 3 either had high dream/placement match, or were still studying so had a chance to still pursue his/her dream.

IV. Of the 15 with high optimism, 7 had only medium intentionality/consistency of career goals.

Of these 7, only 1 had a high dream/placement match, or was still studying.

V. Of the 7 with only medium optimism, 4 still had high intentionality/consistency of career goals.

Of these 4, only one had a good dream/placement match.

Of the 7 with medium optimism, 2 also had medium intentionality/consistency of career goals and one of these had low dream/placement match and one was still in the YouthStar program and was studying for his/her GED.

The two participants who were not employed at the end of the program and were also not still in YouthStar and not in community college, had only medium optimism. One of them had low intentionality/consistency of career goals and one of them had high intentionality/consistency.

- VI. No one had very low stated optimism. This could be because of pressure from the culture of the program to answer the optimism questions positively; but could also indicate tendency of youth in a positive program to be optimistic about life and ones future.
- VII. The *only* participants with high dream/placement matches were students; all job placements were in retail or service. The only exception to this was a young man who was placed as a crew supervisor with the city of Chelsea at \$11/hour, a high wage compared to most other placement wages. This young man's dreams and career goals as stated in the administered surveys were not consistent but his optimism was high. Examples of the high dream/placement matches are: someone interested in teaching and education was studying education; someone interested in helping people and serving God was studying religion; someone interested in art and drawing, beginning to study graphic design. This points toward **the difficulty of young people, especially those from low-income backgrounds, getting jobs anywhere close to their areas of interest; the limits of the job market, where even middle-class professionals have difficulty getting jobs in their area of interest; the need for advanced study, credentials, and certifications** to build up young people's readiness for a higher level job, above the low-skilled service sector.

Analysis of demographics, ethnicity, and other facts about participants and their correlation with optimism, consistency, and placement.

1. YouthStar vs. non-YouthStar participants:

There was a slight difference in the placement rates between these two groups. The added services and higher selectivity of the YouthStar group resulted in a 59% placement (job or school) rate; only 37% were placed in paying jobs. The larger group was placed into jobs at a 55% rate; we don't have data on school placement for this group. Thus the larger group had a better rate of job placement; however, the YouthStar participants who were placed in a job earned an average of \$10.61 an hour, whereas the non-YouthStar Roca participants earned an average of \$8.65 per hour in their first job placement. Also note that literally none of the non-YouthStar youth received benefits at this job placement; whereas at least one of the 9 YouthStar youth placed in paid jobs also received benefits at that job.

See the summary of placement and wage rates and the comparison between the two groups, below:

Group	Job/school placement rate	Job only placement rate	Average wage/hour at job placement:	Benefit rate at job placement
YouthStar (24 total)	59%	37%	\$10.61	4%
Non-YouthStar (175 total)	Not available	55%	\$8.65	0%

2. Court-involved YouthStar participants:

Three of the YouthStar participants were court-involved before the program (all females). They all had high optimism about their future, but there was no pattern of other attitudes (intentionality/consistency). Two were placed in jobs that did not match their dreams/career intentions, and one is still studying for her GED but was not placed in a job.

3. Parents:

Eight of the YouthStar participants are young parents (again, all females). Most of them but not all had high optimism. However, their job placements did not show any consistency. Three are in jobs that didn't match their dreams/career intentions – all at near minimum wage with no benefits. These three had gotten either their high school diploma or their GED but still, being young parents, probably have a challenging future ahead of them.

One of these young parents was not still in the program and was not in a job. Four others were studying either at community college or to complete their GED degree, so have a chance to align their career and dreams. Still, having a young child and no job yet, with studies to complete, presents quite a challenge. Through the surveys we verified that all of these young parents were financially responsible for at least half of the child's needs, lived with the child at least half time, and (for all except one) provided at least half of the child's care.

4. Race or ethnicity:

The large majority of the YouthStar participants were Hispanic. Four self-identified as African American; two others labeled themselves "other" with regard to ethnicity or race. ***There doesn't seem to be any correlation between race or ethnicity and any of our attitude or job placement variables.*** Those few with a high match between their dreams or career desires were different races/ethnicities. Those in school didn't fall into one or the other racial categories.

5. Non-English preferred language:

Of the 7 YouthStar participants who preferred Spanish to English there was a variety of placement outcomes. Almost all had high optimism; one went on to community college; one had a high match of dream/career intention to actual job placement; the rest were placed in low-wage jobs that didn't match their career goals or dreams. ***It seems that preferred or primary language does not make a big difference in the type of outcome for these at-risk youth after a rigorous job-preparation program such as YouthStar in the Boston/Chelsea area.***

6. Gender:

Of the 23 YouthStar youth who finished the program and for whom we have placement data, only 5 were male. This may be a sign in itself, aligning with the national trend of young men slipping in job eligibility, grades in school, and the like.

Comparing the outcomes of the 5 men to those of the young women, we see that the two highest wages per hour at job placement were men's: \$11/hour at traditionally male positions (crew supervisor for a city job; and a parking officer for a private parking company). Neither of these jobs had benefits (like almost all the other reported job placements: a few did not report on benefits, but all except one who reported said that their job did not offer benefits).

The other three young men had a mix of outcomes: one was not placed in a job nor was still in the program; one had a job that was a high match with his dream/career intention; and the other had a job that was a low match with his dream/career intention.

While this is not a scientific study, we can still reflect on the mix of outcomes for the young men in the YouthStar program. Certainly ***bias still exists*** for men over women in some jobs that are traditionally "male appropriate": construction and construction-related industries; data/programming; physical labor requiring physical strength. And these jobs still – in spite of the shift in our economy away from these occupations and toward the service sector – command a higher wage per hour or salary as compared to service or traditionally female occupations. The male-to-female wage gap was still 77% in 2009 – i.e. for every dollar that a full-time, year-round male employee earned, the full-time, year-round female employee earned 77 cents.⁴ So we see that our case numbers 14 and 18⁵ in the YouthStar program, both male, earned \$11/hour in their final job placement, higher than all the other participants except for one female (who earned \$12/hour at a bank teller job). It should be

⁴ In 2009 the median income of FTYR workers was \$47,127 for men, compared to \$36,278 for women. The female-to-male earnings ratio was 0.77, not statistically different from the 2008 ratio. The female-to-male earnings ratio of 0.77 means that, in 2009, female FTYR workers earned 23% less than male FTYR workers. (Carmen DeNavas-Walt, 2010, pp. 7, 50)

⁵ See student outcomes and demographics spreadsheet, Appendix 5.

noted that neither of these young men had a criminal background to deal with; and both had English as their primary language at home in spite of their Hispanic roots.

At the same time, we see one of the young male YouthStar participants essentially dropping out of the program without holding on to a job, although earning his GED like most of the others. He could be seen as representing the young men in the program who don't make it in the traditional male occupational roles but also do not find themselves in a service job that may not have felt like a good fit for him. Although his optimism rating was high, his dreams were not consistent over the 3 surveys and he ended the program with no job and not continuing on in the program.

The women had a mix of placement outcomes, from minimum-wage service jobs to higher-paid bank teller jobs, to continuing education in fields that matched their dreams and intentions. Most of the young women were parents, as mentioned above; and all of these except one had the responsibility of both providing childcare and providing the financing necessary for raising the child. *Three of the four young women who went on to community or liberal arts colleges were not parents. This could be explained by the very simple fact that being young and poor, raising a small child, holding down a job (or taking out loans), and going to school at the same time is an extremely challenging, if not impossible, load for anyone to handle.*

The final comment on the young women in the program is just to repeat what was stated above: that *the only people whose dreams/career intentions matched their final placement were the students, except for one young man placed in a work crew for the city of Chelsea.* It is important that all young people attach to the labor market in some way when the alternative is to stay attached to street life and crime, even if their job is a low-paid service job that does not fulfill their dreams or career aspirations. But moving on to higher education still provides the most hope for stability, if not reaching the American dream of being middle class, for low-income young people.

Overall Summary of Study and Final Conclusions

Regarding the certificate and placement goals of the study, we saw that the large Roca group fell short of both of their certificate attainment goals, especially the single-certificate goal (by 15%). The small YouthStar group just about attained their certificate goals: they only fell short of the single-certification-attainment goal by 1% (or 2 youth), and surpassed the double-certification-attainment goal by 3% (or 3 participants). This indicates that the smaller group with more services and a more selective group of at-risk youth has more of a chance at success than a larger group without special services.

With regard to job placement goals, we saw that the large Roca group had a higher job placement rate than the YouthStar group; however, the YouthStar group's wage at placement significantly exceeded that of the larger group (\$10.61/hour vs. \$8.65/hour). Without the large group's school/post-secondary placement data, it is hard to tell whether the YouthStar group's college placement successes compares favorably with that of the larger group's.

With regard to the question “does intentionality effect job placement goals?,” **there was no clear indication that having an intention to enter a particular profession gave an at-risk youth a great chance at entering that profession, or getting a job with pay and benefits better than low-paid service jobs.** Of the seven with high optimism and high intentionality, only 3 had a clear dream/job placement match. To repeat the observations of the study: *young people, especially those from low-income backgrounds, have great difficulty getting jobs in their areas of interest; there are great limits to the job market, where even middle-class professionals have difficulty getting jobs in their area of interest; and there is a need for advanced study, credentials, and certifications to build up young people's readiness for a higher level job, above the low-skilled service sector.*

My look at the effect of demographics and other human or cultural elements of the YouthStar students' lives resulted in only a few relevant observations.

First, I observed no significant relevance or impact on success or failure in the program's goals from 3 of the demographic variables in the study: court involvement (previous adjudication); race or ethnicity; and having a preferred language besides English. For court involvement, there was no observable difference between success and failure between the youth with a background of court involvement and those with none. With regard to race and ethnicity, there were no observable differences between the different racial or ethnic groups within the program. However, it should be noted that all the students in the study are from “minority” or racial groups that generally have experienced oppression and bias in the United States. If there had been students from favored (non-oppressed Caucasian) ethnic or racial backgrounds to compare their outcomes with, we may have seen some variation related to race or ethnicity. Finally, there also were no observed differences between success and failure between the youth that had English as their preferred language and those for whom another language was their preferred language.

But there were some interesting observations with regard to gender and with regard to parent status of the YouthStar participants. We saw that the two highest wages per hour at job placement were men's: \$11/hour at traditionally male positions (crew supervisor for a city job; and a parking officer for a private parking company). The other three young men had a mix of outcomes, similar to the young women's. From these observations, it appears that ***positive bias still exists*** for men over women in some jobs that are traditionally "male appropriate": construction and construction-related industries; data/programming; physical labor requiring physical strength. And these jobs still – in spite of the shift in our economy away from these occupations and toward the service sector – command a higher wage per hour or salary as compared to service or traditionally female occupations.

My observations of the young women lead us to the conclusion that women, no matter how able, intentional, or optimistic, still face the major challenge of being the main caretakers of and providers for children. Most of the young women in the study were parents; and all of these except one had the responsibility of both providing childcare and providing the financing necessary for raising the child. It is clear that the burden of providing for a child or for children is a major impediment to furthering one's career or schooling: ***Three of the four young women who went on to community or liberal arts colleges were not parents. Being young and poor, raising a small child, holding down a job (or taking out loans), and going to school at the same time is an extremely challenging, if not impossible, load for anyone to handle.***

This leads to perhaps the most important observation from the study of the Roca YouthStar students: that ***the only people whose dreams/career intentions matched their final placement were the students, except for one young man placed in a work crew for the city of Chelsea.*** It is important that all young people attach to the labor market in some way when the alternative is to stay attached to street life and crime, even if their job is a low-paid service job that does not fulfill their dreams or career aspirations. ***Still, it could be concluded from this observational study that it is extremely important for young people, especially women, to attend college when possible, so that they can continue to try to pursue a path toward their career goals. It is also important that young women delay having children as long as possible in order to increase the possibility that they can continue on to college, so as not to get locked into a life supporting a child on a low-paid service job salary.***

These conclusions echo one thesis of the Harris and Ganzglass article cited previously (pages 19-20), that income and class makes more difference in a young person's ability to obtain a high school diploma than does race or ethnicity.

This was recently argued in a *New York Times* article based on scholarly studies that "suggest that the achievement gap between rich and poor children is widening..." (Tavernise, 2012) The studies find that the achievement gap between white and black students has narrowed over the past few decades but that the gap between rich and poor has widened in this same period. In addition, these studies were done before 2008 when the recession lowered the incomes of many middle- and low-income families, so researchers suspect that the trend will be even more pronounced today.

The *American Progress* article's other main point – that very few dropouts who earn a GED and then enroll in college end up getting a college diploma – presents a challenge to our society: that to address the problem of at-risk youth and violence amongst youth in low-income communities, we must allocate resources sufficient to help them to defy the odds and attain a college diploma. Any school system, nonprofit organization, or governmental entity that rises to that important challenge is to be commended. But the goals reached through this one federally-funded program are not adequate by themselves. The program's long-term success will require that more agencies, organizations, individuals and communities increase resources of all types –programmatic funding, mentors, social services, and more -- and prioritize the lives and needs of these vulnerable youth. It also rests on the wisdom of youth and young adult programs such as Roca having strong counselors that can steer youth to post-secondary education, and the young women away from childbirth, wherever possible.

In the longer term, and on a wider scale, this study also points to the need for economic policies that encourage the training and education of low-income youth for jobs that will build into careers. This should include jobs which single mothers, and those who have been skill-deficient or late to acquire their GED or diploma, can succeed at and then move slowly into stable careers. Generous tax credits should be available for businesses that can offer such paths. Programs that have for decades assisted tens of millions of low- and moderate-income people to attend college or vocational training, such as low-interest loan programs and the Pell grants, (Califano, 1999) should be maintained and not cut.

With the foundations of our country's middle class having been shaken because of fiscal and economic policy over the past decades, the stability of our future, especially the future of our low-income residents, rests on a wise allocation of the resources in the private and public spheres in the United States, and the wise counseling of our youth as they prepare to enter the world of work.

D) APPENDICES

1. Intake Survey for Youth Star Group (Fall 2010)
2. Second Survey for Youth Star Group (February 2011)
3. Third At-Exit Survey for Youth Star Group (August 2011)
4. Stakeholder Identification
5. Student data and demographic information spreadsheets
6. Suggestions for additional readings
7. Bibliography

YouthStar Training and Employment Goals, Abilities and Interests Survey

(at-Entry)

Fall 2010

Dreams and Interests

1. When I was young, I dreamed of being:

2. I am good at: (check all that are true for you)

☐ Making things with my hands

☐ Cleaning and organizing things

☐ Communicating with people

☐ Helping people in need

☐ Writing stories or writing nonfiction

☐ Working with older people

☐ Working with children

☐ Teaching

☐ Using computers

☐ Other (describe)

Employment or Career Goals:

1. I am interested in the following skills that are taught through Roca:

Carpentry or Construction Certificate

Building Maintenance Work Certificate

Forklift Certificate

Cooking/Culinary work certificate

Cosmetology certificate

Healthcare (C NA certificate)

Hospitality or customer service skills

Receptionist skills (including computer skills needed for receptionist work)

2. I am very interested in: (check all that apply)

	Short-term job	Long-term career
Barber work		
Beautician work		
Carpenter's assistant work		
Construction work		
Office or building maintenance		
Office, house or building cleaning		
Heavy machinery operation		
Environmental remediation: clean-up of waste sites		
Hospitality work		
Receptionist work		

See next page for final questions....

3. Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided/ Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My friends and family would support me in these career paths.					
2. My mother or father had a steady job at least some of the time when I was growing up.					
3. If I could get a job at one of the jobs I'm interested in, it would be worth it to:					
a) stay off drugs and alcohol.					
b) show up for work on time.					
c) quit my street life.					
4. I would prefer to have a job that is helping others or making the world a better place.					

Thank you!

YouthStar Training and Employment Goals, Abilities, Interests and
Progress Survey (2nd survey)

February 2011

Name: _____

Current Dreams and Interests

My dream job is:

My *realistic* ideal or dream job is:

Skills

List three things you are good at, and then think of a skill, job, or career that might match up to this ability:

I am good at:	I might be able to use this ability in/by:
1.	
2.	
3.	

(over)

Optimism and Persistence

2. Please check the box with the best response:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided/ Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) It may take a while, but I believe that I will end up with a job or career that I really like.					
b) If I try I can achieve many things.					
c) The Roca program gives me tools and support I need to overcome most difficulties I face in getting a job and leading a productive, safe life.					
	YES:	NO:			
d) I have children:					
e) Number of children I have:		(put the number in the box to the left)			
f) Number of siblings I have:		(put the number in the box to the left)			

3. I believe that I will live to the age of _____.

4. Please explain in a few sentences what “green jobs” means to you. Give an example of what you think it means.

Thank you!

THIRD SURVEY OF YOUTHSTAR GROUP:

YouthStar Training and Employment Goals, Abilities, Interests and
Progress

End of Cycle Survey: September/October 2011

Name: _____

Current Dreams and Interests

3. Now, at the end of the YouthStar program, my realistic dream job is:

Skills

4. List skills or certificates you got at Roca, and things you might be able to do with this skill or certificate:

Skills or certificates I obtained at Roca	I might be able to use this skill or certificate in the following job or way:	Does this skill or certificate lead you to your dream job? If yes, how?
1.		
2.		
3.		

Optimism and Persistence

5. Please check the box with the best response:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided/ Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
g) It may take a while, but I believe that I will end up with a job or career that I really like.					
h) If I try, I can achieve many things.					
i) The Roca program gave me tools and support I need to overcome most difficulties I face in getting a job and leading a productive, safe life.					

6. I believe that I will live to the age of _____.

IV. Some final information:

A. Where did you live in the 3 months before starting in the YouthStar program? (summer of 2010)

B. If you are a parent:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Do you live with the child? | YES | NO |
| 2. Are you responsible for financially providing for the child? | YES | NO |
| 3. Do you provide at least 1/2 of the child care with your time? | YES | NO |

Thank you!

Identification of Stakeholder Analysis Team

Name	Affiliation and/or Relationship to Planned Project
Lily Elkins-Howard	Development Consultant, Roca, Inc, Chelsea, MA
Christian Calvo	Roca graduate; owner, Team Leader of Small Green Business Development at Roca.
Dana Betts	Director of Programs, Roca, Inc.
Sotun Krouch	Director of Data, Roca, Inc; responsible for data management for this Pathways Out of Poverty project
Victor Jose	Coordinator of Youth Star group; oversees group of 26 Youth Star youth.
Roca Students	Bank of 600 students, potentially eligible for skill and career training, job placement; Including 27 YouthStar students funded by Corporation for National and Community Service
Partners	Jobs for Youth Northeast Regional Carpenters Union Mass. Lift American Red Cross North Shore Community College Suffolk Building Services (a green business) Dept. of Labor, ETA
Funders	Department of Labor, Employment Training Administration; Pathways Out of Poverty Grant

Suggestions for Additional Reading

Additional sources not cited in Literature Review:

1. Levin-Epstein, J., and Greenberg, Mark, Editors, Leave No Youth Behind: Opportunities for Congress to Reach Disconnected Youth. Center for Law and Social Policy, July 2003. This book reviews six federal programs relevant to at-risk youth: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of WIA; financial aid programs addressing barriers to access to higher education under the Higher Education Act; special ed and related service under the Individuals with Disabilities act; Services for homeless and runaway youth funded by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act; services and cash assistance provided to youth under the TANF block grant; and youth services and activities funded under WIA. This is a valuable resource for YouthBuild and Roca sustainability/fundraising work in the future.
2. Siegel, Beth, and Peter Kwass, Jobs and the Urban Poor: Publicly Initiated Sectoral Strategies. Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc. Somerville, MA. November 1995. This dated book was a seminal work in launching what seems now to be a widely-accepted approach to workforce development: development of jobs by sector, meaning intervening with the help of public and/or private resources in certain industries or sector that have the potential to provide good jobs for low-income people. This strategy is not just seen as a service to poor people, but a sound economic development tool that should benefit local and national economies as well.
3. The Aspen Institute: Workforce Strategies Initiatives Update, April 2007: Sector Initiatives and Community Colleges: Working Together to Provide Education for Low-Wage Working Adults. This paper addresses the role of the community college for the special needs of low-income working adults. Some of the Roca students would fit in this category. Raises the issue of whether Roca students might be ready to move into secondary school and whether Roca staff have the resources to connect them to appropriate schools in addition to, or instead of, their job placement work.
4. Hill, D. L. (2006). *The urban choice: A case study of high school graduates career choices*. Dissertation, University of Phoenix. This qualitative single case study explored the factors that lead to urban high school graduates' career decisions. The theoretical framework proposed that career development was linked to ones social, emotional, and intellectual development over five stages in their life span. The literature implied that external situations influenced career choices. According to the 30 participants interviewed in this study, both sets of influences are determinants that guide career decisions. While themes varied as to individual values, the underlying conclusion of the interview data in this research study is that career choices are made based on career qualifications, knowledge regarding careers, and, accessibility and availability to careers. Leadership visibility and leadership mentors at every career level and in the community, is needed to inspire and attract new leaders. The final findings of this study posited that six things revealed career choice influences: a) school personnel, b) academic

preparedness, c) family influences, d) economic influence, e) self-concept, and f) insufficient leadership training. Recommendations invite all community stakeholders to participate in the career development of urban young adults and further suggest additional research to be conducted on leadership in urban communities. (Hill, 2006, p. 124). [Literature referral via Antoinette Bolanos, PhD candidate, Southern New Hampshire University, 2011.]

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