

the **LISTENING PROJECT**

giving voice to adolescent youth living in difficult circumstances



By Gloria Rudolf, Ph.D.
Report prepared for Youth Services
and adapted by Sadie Fischesser, Ph.D.

Windham County, Vermont
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THE LISTENING PROJECT

We thank the young people and adult supporters who participated in the study as Youth Research Interviewers, Adult Partners, Focus Group Leaders and Presenters:

Youth Interviewers:

Stephen Bauch
Matt Dorman
Cassie Miramontes
Cara Rodrigues
Katelyn Sylvester

Adult Partners:

Heather Berry
Rob Gunther-Mohr
Susan Gunther-Mohr
Michael Marchand
Abigail Perry

Focus Group Leaders:

Ricky Davidson
Karen Molina
Diana Wahle

Presenters:

The Leland and
Gray Players
coached by
Ann Landenberger

And, in closing, we recognize the study's twenty young participants who gave us insight into their challenges, failures, joys, talents and sources of pride.

We would like to express our gratitude to the members of the Youth Opportunity Planning Committee:

Carmen Derby (United Way), Bob Edwards (Dover Police), Sadie Fischesser (Windham Child Care Association), Susan Gunther-Mohr (Listening Project Coordinator), Cindy Hayford (Deerfield Valley Community Partnership), Lisa Keller (Vermont Department for Children & Families – Brattleboro District), Konstantin von Krusenstiern (United Way/Brattleboro Retreat), Lisa Kuneman (formerly of Windham Child Care Association), Barbara Ternes (Parks Place), Allyson Villars (Youth Services) and Diana Wahle (Youth Opportunity Planning Coordinator).

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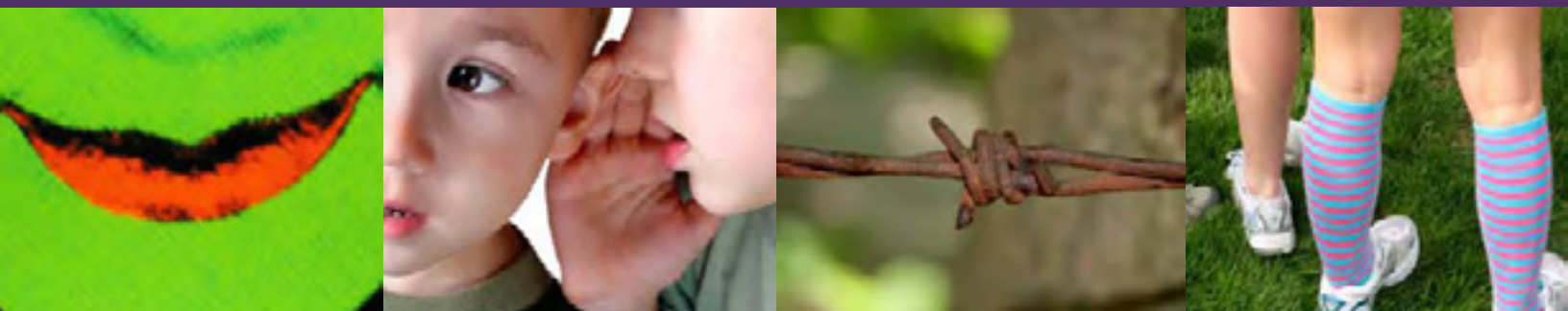
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A FIRST STEP FOR OUR COMMUNITY

As an organization committed to listen to and learn from the youth it serves, Youth Services embarked on a process in 2007 to develop a strategic plan that

"Part of the reason why I don't participate in helping out my community is because it seems like, no matter what we say, it's always wrong. It's never good enough. We're kids. We don't know what we're talking about. I mean no one ever really says that directly, but you kind of get the sense of that's where they're going with how they're saying things." –Tim

would guide the agency and the community in serving youth in Windham County, Vermont. This strategic planning process was the catalyst for The Listening Project.

The Listening Project is a beginning. It provides information that we need to move ahead together as a community where all of us—people of all ages—are engaged in the work of living together respectfully.

WHO WAS INVOLVED

Twenty youth from around Windham County, Vermont, were selected to participate

as respondents in the study. These young people were systematically identified based on several social characteristics that included age, gender, class, and location of residence. They are young men and women ages 13-19 from working class or poorer backgrounds, and from all four school districts in Windham County. They all meet the criteria for inclusion as "youth living in particularly difficult circumstances," meaning they were potentially at risk in five or more of the ten areas identified using a tool called the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI). This same instrument is used by Juvenile Services and the Department for Children and Families in the State of Vermont.

Five youth meeting the same criteria were selected to participate as research interviewers. The interviewers worked on a team with an adult research partner of the same gender. Before beginning interviews, the teams completed a 2½-day training on interviewing techniques and on revising the survey. The teams then conducted 1-hour intensive interviews with the 20 youth respondents. Following these interviews, there were three focus group meetings to which all of the youth participants were invited. At these meetings, they reviewed initial findings and provided initial analysis in the form of additional commentary.



WHAT WAS LEARNED

There are three clusters of ideas that can be used as guides for planning in our community if we listen:

Everyday relationships

- It's all about relationships!

The number one need expressed by every participant was not about

resources or services. It was about relationship building. These youth yearn for caring, respectful and trustworthy relationships with everyone in their lives: family, friends, teachers, counselors, principals and police. They asked that we consider them as whole and complex people in everything we choose to do and in all our interactions with them.

- We must stop the “bad kid” label syndrome.

Participants told us about the “bad kid” label and the pernicious effects such labeling had on their work every day. Adults who work and interact with youth need to first understand how powerful this labeling can be and how it can interfere with the promotion of youth opportunities. Once the “bad kid” label is given, we might overlook positive attributes like generosity. In this study we found that youth who have little are willing to give much. They frequently thought about others before themselves.

- Partnering with youth makes a difference.

Adolescent youth are valuable community resources with important information and skills to contribute. We can find ways for adults to listen

The key lesson and challenge is to find a way to shift our framing of youth in the community so that adults and youth shift how they treat each other in every encounter every day.

to and learn from youth about their lives that will positively impact encounters and build relationships.

Places for youth to gather

- Teens are not too shy to talk about what they might want and need in a teen center.

There are also auxiliary services, like transportation, that might enable youth to visit a center and spend time there.

- They speak about wanting safe and fun places to hold dances and other activities and to skateboard.

Life planning and social support

- Positive social support networks can be maintained and extended.

Participants gave us a glimpse into their support systems and told us about the people in their lives whom they cherish, feel valued by and trust. This challenges all of us to imagine with them programs that could help maintain these networks

of relationships or bring in new people who might be a positive part of that system. We might even explore ways technology and different face-to-face methods might extend positive social networks.

- There is a need to stress out safely—and without penalty—in school.

Sometimes the stress of daily life

comes out, no matter where you are. This study reveals a multitude of stresses, personal and family-related, that participants bring to school. Where they do not already exist, it is worth investigating the possibility of a “safe haven” at school for students who just can’t keep it together on any given day. Some supportive adults are needed to help students figure out how to get back into the routine of the day.

- Planning for the future is now.

Most of the youth in this project have a dream for their near-term futures. Those dreams could more easily come to fruition with some support from adults. Youth are craving several things to help them succeed: support from friends and family to steer away from drugs and alcohol; financial aid; conversations with professionals in their chosen field; people to help motivate them; and support to help them stay focused on their goals.

HOW IT DEVELOPED

HOUSEHOLD RESIDENCE OF INTERVIEWEES by Parental Presence and Gender

All interviewees in this study had a place to live.

Household Residence	Female Interviewees	Male Interviewees	Total Interviewees
	No.	No.	No. % of Total
2 biological parents present	3	3	6 30%
Fewer than 2 biological parents present	7	7	14 70%
[Single parent]	[2]	[3]	[5]
[Foster parents]	[2]	[1]	[3]
[1 biological parent + partner]	[3]	[3]	[6]
TOTAL	10	10	20 100%

After consideration of a number of different approaches, a research study was designed to give voice to the youth living in Windham County in the most difficult of circumstances—teenagers whose voices are the least likely to be sought after or heard. The core questions are:

- What do these youth think they need to grow up to be healthy, valued and empowered 21-year-olds?
- Once we know what youth think, how can we strengthen what exists to support them and confront the barriers?

The goal was to go beyond the survey data that exists about youth in the county to understand how youth think their present circumstances impact their hopes for the future. To deeply achieve that goal, a unique youth development research model was developed and used that included youth as interviewers, analysts and respondents. They were

supported by adult partners. This model contributed to the richness of the data, the validity of the results and a productive and respectful relationship between youth and adults.

WHERE IT LEADS

The work of this project will be

"Maybe listen to our ideas instead of just doing stuff that you think is what we want. Because like a lot of things that people do around here aren't based on what kids want. It's based on what they think we want and it's pointless." –Craig

extended into the community to bring about real cultural change. This result will be achieved by focusing not solely on what youth are doing, but also on what adults are doing with relation to youth.

The goal is to shift community thinking to understand the difficult circumstances many youth experience and create positive circumstances so the whole community can thrive using the three clusters of ideas above to guide us.

Youth Services will lead a Youth Opportunity Planning Process (based on the work of William A. Lofquist). This is a systematic approach that guides interested people—youth and adults—through a clear process of taking a look at their community and the various factors important in the lives of young people and then leads to the shaping of an action strategy.

Already more than 50 community partners have expressed interest in joining in this process with youth partners to build community resources that encourage positive outcomes. These partners have signed Memoranda of Understanding and are listed on the Youth Services website. It will be the work of all of us to bring those visions to reality.

EVERYDAY RELATIONSHIPS: SOURCES OF SOLACE AND STRAIN



Relationships are the “stuff” that make up social support systems. It’s not possible to understand a person’s life without understanding who is holding them up, surrounding them and supporting them on a daily basis—or not. By beginning to understand the complexities of youth’s everyday relationships—with people at home, at school, on the street or elsewhere—we begin to understand them and are able to listen to and imagine ways to help them thrive.

Family

It would be hard to overstate the central place family has in the lives of the youth interviewed. Interviews suggested that at least some family members, if not the entirety of the family itself, are their principal source of love and

support “through thick and thin.” Interviewees told stories about family members who defended them, came to their assistance at all times of day and night and cared for them. Family is worth fighting for.

Alongside this love and support, however, family was also described as a heavy weight. Family was identified as a source of sadness and worry.

Interviewees are dealing with serious and multiple family problems that illustrate this strain:

- More than half of the respondents themselves have illnesses (including chronic pain, terminal disease and mental illness), and two-thirds have close family members with serious emotional or physical illness.

“My mom’s not going to be living for that much longer. She’s very ill. I just try not to think about it when I’m in school...because, if I do, I won’t concentrate.”

- Many of the participants were dealing with issues of current or past physical or sexual abuse. “I worry about going to my dad’s house because in the past we haven’t had a good relationship. We fight.”

- Absent parents—those they longed to be with and those they wanted to avoid—played central roles in many of the participants’ stories.

“My mother lives far away. She’s my best friend. I constantly worry about her safety and how she’s doing. A few members of my family have been adopted and I just feel like they’re not part of my family anymore. I don’t like the fact that my family has been separated. It makes me feel really upset.”

“My mom—she’s just really important to me. She’s doing everything she can to take care of us and she works so hard to get me back. It wasn’t a matter of I was taken away; she just gave me to her parents so she could get over alcohol. And now she’s got a job—two jobs working on three. And she’s supporting so much for the family. I’m really proud of her.” –Anya

Who is the most important person in your life?

Of the 20 youth interviewed in the project, 18 chose a close family member as the most important person to them. Female participants named only female relatives—especially mothers and grandmothers. Male participants included other males more often, naming fathers or categories that included males (like “parents” or “grandparents”) two-thirds of the time.

- The economic conditions for the family brought another set of concerns.

“I feel worried when my dad is out of a job...if we’ll have enough heat this winter.”

- When asked if they had discretionary income how they would spend it, the majority would pay for safe and stable homes for their families. Others wanted to give it back to the community in ways that are meaningful.

Participants in the project were dealing with all of these issues on top of the usual stress of being an adolescent in our culture.

Friends

Most of the youth who were interviewed seem to have a rich social life that includes a good number of friends and close friendships. These close friendships, like family relations, involve great levels of trust and intimacy. Sometimes more than family, close friends serve as confidants and advisors.

However, like family, these close friendships can be a source of strain. Some of the youth reported these friends “got them into trouble” by introducing them to drugs and physical fights. Occasionally, youth ended these relationships, but this required courage and forethought.



“He has always been there for me, been a good friend...I know he won’t stab me in the back over something. You can tell him something and he won’t spread it out.” –Peter



Authority figures

Youth interact with many other people on a daily basis who are not part of their intimate social fabric in obvious ways but impact their everyday life. The most common figures named by participants were school employees and police officers. With regard to these relationships as well, youth in interviews described them as both positive and negative.

Teachers and school officials

School is the place where adolescents spend many of their waking hours, brought together into groups packed with teenage emotions. For many of the participants, school experiences were their greatest source of self-pride. Adults at school (teachers, counselors and school officials) were sources of inspiration, self-esteem and confidence.

On the other hand, adults at school evoked a kind of pessimism and resentment for youth who felt disenfranchised. Adults and other students at school contributed to an environment that some of the interviewees found oppressive and irreparable. Many participants said they felt labeled as “bad kids” and then were caught in a downward spiral from which it was hard to escape.

“I think it’s harder for kids to talk to people because they feel like they’re being judged and labeled...” –Carol

Police officers

For many of the youth interviewed, run-ins with the legal system had already become part of their personal reality. When describing good relationships with the police, youth interviewees from all areas talked about receiving help, being given a break when they had been caught or being treated respectfully. There were bad experiences as well. Youth interviewees cited examples of being treated disrespectfully or



95% of youth interviewed in this study had experiences with the police, both positive and negative.

rudely, sometimes roughly or with unnecessary force; of not getting the help they needed; and of not being adequately informed of their rights.

Bringing the background to the foreground

What is clear about the interviewees’ everyday relationships is that they are the backbone of their social lives. The complexities and conflicts of these relationships carry into their interactions with adults who teach, counsel, otherwise serve or simply interact with them. Adults need to start from a nonjudgmental position that leaves space for the complexities in which youth are enmeshed. These youth need as a starting point a way to extend support networks outward, to bring as much love, caring and trust into their orbits as possible.

PLACES FOR YOUTH TO GATHER

When it comes to having fun or bringing joy to their lives, youth interviewees agreed: it's all about hanging out with friends. Friends, they reported, act goofy, tell inside jokes and make them all smile.

Hanging out with friends can mean a number of things:

- Go over to a friend's house to watch a movie or TV, listen to music, play a card or video game, or "party."
- Get together to play basketball, soccer, baseball or football; or go swimming, fishing, hunting, biking, skating or snowboarding.
- Walk around town together talking.
- Congregate with friends to talk and text.
- Drive around town and figure out what to do or go to Keene to get away from home, if you have a car.
- Do something illegal.

This list is not long, and the list of places participants can go to do them is even shorter: friends' houses, sports areas, skate parks, parking lots or transit centers. For youth outside the immediate Brattleboro area, the list of potential hang-out locations was once again shorter. Almost all the interviewees returned again and again to the theme that in Windham County's towns and communities, there are not enough safe, fun places nearby to get together and socialize.

When interviewees were asked how they would try to improve their community or town if they suddenly had a big chunk of money, two-thirds said they would develop new spaces for teenagers to hang out.

Making spaces for teens

The youth interviewed admitted that it would be difficult to build a successful teen center because drugs, alcohol and violence are for many youth an integral part of their history and current culture. These activities are not conducive to a teen center. However, participants still generated ideas for what they thought successful teen spaces would need to have:

- A welcoming atmosphere—according to a teenagers' standards

This would mean bright colors, comfortable seating, a "homey" feeling and a kitchen with lots of food.

- A place that could house many different activities

"Take a huge building, like Home Depot, and turn it into a huge place for kids to hang out with lots of different things in it like skateboard ramps, a bike trail, a big basketball court..."
—Michael

- Late-night hours

Staying open late, past 8 P.M. perhaps, would allow some teenagers who needed it the opportunity to have a meal and a safe place to do homework.



- Teenagers separated by age

Hanging out is different for older teens and younger ones so they need different activities and spaces at different times.

- Keep it inexpensive to access and operate

Some teenagers simply cannot afford to access already existing places.

- Public transportation provided

Like many Windham County residents without their own transportation, teens have a hard time getting to activities. If they live outside the immediate Brattleboro area, many of the bus routes are not accessible after school hours.

- Realistic rules and regulations: allow swearing

"Why would someone want to go there if they're going to



get in trouble for saying bad words?" asked one interviewee.



Putting places on the map

While not all of these ideas are viable or sustainable, they give our community insight into what teens might seek in spaces designed for them and provide a road map for future and potential projects. These ideas also reinforce how important it is to listen to the needs and concerns of youth when designing projects and spaces we hope they will use or benefit from.

LIFE PLANNING AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Having a goal that you think is in your reach is a key element in a life that is thriving. The 20 working class or poor teenagers

"I don't want to be stuck around here doing nothing. I want to actually have something set right now, like a focus for what I'm doing after high school... That's what will help me because if I didn't go to school I would be nothing really."
—Fred

interviewed for this project live in particularly difficult circumstances. A majority already have had serious problems in school and been in trouble with the law. Despite these difficulties, almost all the interviewees had ideas about and hopes for their futures.



Ambitions

Youth interviewees were asked what careers they were interested in at this point in their lives. Almost all could identify a specific career or area of study. They included a wide range of subject areas and professions:

- Social work
- Physical therapy
- Law enforcement and criminal justice
- Medicine—from surgeon to medical assistant
- Psychology
- Child care or early childhood education
- Forestry
- Auto mechanics
- Music
- Military
- Information technology

More of the female participants (80% of those interviewed) saw themselves as headed to college and to professional careers. Fewer of the male participants (30%) aspired to go to college immediately, although they did not necessarily rule it out as a later possibility.



Getting from here to there

Most of the youth who described a particular career or education goal have already taken some actions toward realizing their dreams, and many considered it their sole responsibility to succeed. They said they had reached out for advice from teachers, school counselors and other adults. Some were taking preparatory classes or using websites to learn more, and others were tapping into community resources (such as the Career Center, Youth Services, Outward Bound, etc.).

A few suggestions were offered by interviewees to help themselves and their peers forward their career dreams:

- Support from friends and family to help them stay on track instead of going to alcohol or drugs

It is not just the teen who needs support, but those they are in “everyday relationships” with who need to understand and positively support their aspirations. This might mean providing programs or resources on how to offer that support.

- Financial aid
The costs of pursuing education and career goals begin long before formal entry into specific



programs. Often there are costs associated with entrance exams and applications. Resources that might be available to students need to be better publicized, and students could receive technical assistance in accessing funds.

- Connections with currently practicing professionals in their chosen field

Formal and informal mentoring or work visit programs help teens imagine

themselves in careers and have a better understanding of the steps they need to take on a career path.

- Help with motivation through support groups
“Yes, we’ve got to work on our goals ourselves, but it would be

great to get extra support. I think that if people have goals they’re going to work toward them, and I really think people need like a support group of people who can help them work toward their goal, get to their goal and keep them out of trouble.” –Debbie

- Specific goal-setting

One participant suggested that she would benefit from working with someone to develop 5-year goals with specific action plans. This kind of intentional plan might benefit all youth in our community to see the steps between where they are and where they might be. Given the complex relationships that youth are living in, having this kind of planning available through a concerted schools/family/community effort might ensure that all youth can develop 5-year goals.

“I need somebody to push me to do better because without this I don’t think it’s going to happen.” –Ruby

CONCLUSIONS

This research project has produced a wealth of information from 20 poor and working class youth in Windham County, Vermont, who are living in particularly difficult circumstances. It has provided insight into some of their joys, pains and unmet needs as well as ideas for improvement.

When young people are engaged in community decisions that affect them, better decisions are made and everyone benefits. By involving youth in meaningful ways, we tap new energy, knowledge and leadership. Through listening well, we can learn why, all too often, young people do not participate in civic activities.

The Listening Project is a Call to Action to all adults who work with or care about youth. We challenge ourselves to “walk the talk,” broaden our thinking and share power with youth.

“Through this project I have become more gracious and empathetic toward others’ feelings and more open to their points of view.”

—Cara Rodrigues, Youth Interviewer

Imagine what could be achieved if youth were engaged in more meaningful ways to improve conditions in our community! We need to keep listening.

Empowering youth researchers

“I never really knew what the word ‘respect’ meant. I understand it better now and feel like this is really the first time, through this research project, that I have felt it about myself or from others.”

—Matt Dorman,
Youth Interviewer

The action component of the research, including youth as interviewers, interviewees and analysts, provided a glimpse into how an engaged and respectful culture with youth and adults can look and feel. The youth involved as participants had the opportunity to learn useful new skills and were engaged in respectful professional relationships with adults. This is the kind of empowering experience—of being able to influence events in their lives—that can lead to engaged participation in civic life.



Ideas for future research

The data collected here is a fertile starting point. It would be interesting to explore some of the issues more deeply and others on a broader scale.

One aspect of this small-scale research that calls out for further study is the unusual approach taken by incorporating youth subjects into the research process as interviewers and analysts as well as interviewees. There were two principal reasons for taking this approach: to improve the chances of learning authentic and personal information from youth, and to provide participant teenagers with the opportunity to learn new skills and be a part of a model process of creating respectful working relationships between young people and adult project members.

The positive anecdotal comments of the youth researchers hint at exciting and promising possibilities for a research approach that includes subjects as researchers and analysts. These impacts are worthy of more exploration through systematic research.

A note about this text

Please note that in the preparation of this document, some quotes were lightly edited for readability.

Names and identifying features of the youth interviewed have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the youth participants.

YOUTH INTERVIEWERS

Stephen Bauch, age 16, Wilmington

Stephen has an inordinate amount of strife in his life. School administrators in the Southwest Supervisory District recommended him because he is someone who possesses a quiet but dependable charisma. Stephen is the kind of person who looks out for the “little guy,” sometimes to his own detriment. His care in relating to interviewees always suggested a deep sensitivity to and respect for personal suffering and the privacy it often requires.

Matt Dorman, age 15, Williamsville and Newfane

People who have known him for many years recommended Matt. They recognized in him an ability to reach out across social barriers and shake hands with people very different from him. They had seen leadership qualities in him and felt it important for him to be reminded of those qualities. Again and again, these strengths proved helpful in the completion of the project. An expression of genuine humility also emerged in the 4-month timeframe and served to increase his credibility with those he interviewed.

Cassie Miramontes, age 16, Jamaica

Cassie is an artist; she is always looking at the human form to better understand its contours. Through this project, she focused her attention on the inside of people and learned about what goes on under the skin. Perhaps

because of her artistic attention to details, Cassie was a wonderful interviewer, unearthing many layers for analysis.

“I’d never done a big interview before. It’s like getting to know a person from the inside out. I’m an artist; I’ve been drawing ever since I could put a pencil to paper. Now I see that doing a good interview is an art. I’m learning to withhold judgment and to be careful not to push people I’m interviewing beyond what they are able to share. Getting to know a person is an endless process.”

—Cassie Miramontes,
Youth interviewer

Cara Rodrigues, age 17, South Wardsboro

As a student with a learning disability, Cara was particularly sensitive to the ways in which her interviewees may have felt marginalized. She was especially moved by the pain her interviewees related in group settings; she could speak about it with power and graciousness.

Katelyn Sylvester, age 15, West Brattleboro

Brought on board after the formal training weekend and as a result of an unexpected opening, Katelyn immediately understood what was expected of her. A serious student, Katelyn observed how much she learned about the nature of research, noting in particular that, previously, research had always meant books and journal articles. Through her work on the project, she came to understand how immediate and human research can be—people and the stories they tell as well as the books written about them.

ADULT PARTNERS

Heather Berry, Townshend

Heather has worked in the classroom for many years. She has also had an academic interest in interviewing and research. Her ease with youth living in difficult circumstances is evident in her teaching and was demonstrated frequently in her work with the project.

Rob Gunther-Mohr, South Newfane

Rob has worked with students with learning disabilities his entire career. His sensitivity to learners who struggle made him an excellent candidate for assisting youth interviewers in uncovering the more tender aspects of their subjects’ lives.

Michael Marchand, Putney

Michael’s calm is immediately evident. It has an influence over groups and one-on-one, and he seemed a winning addition to everything about the Listening Project. Michael loves being with youth, and one suspects that this does not escape the attention of those he touches.

Abby Perry, Newfane

Abby has worked for many years with youth, both in and out of the classroom. She is not afraid to candidly share her own struggles with those with whom she works, and they respond to her honesty. In turn, they trust her for having been trusted.

RESEARCHERS

Gloria Rudolf, Project Researcher

Gloria is an anthropologist who teaches in the United States and Latin America. She has been involved in many types of social research. Along with a 35-year ongoing ethnographic study of a community in the highlands in Panama, she has designed and conducted numerous studies with and for non-profit organizations in the U.S. This has included needs assessments, evaluations and impact studies of projects aiming to assist populations as diverse as middle school youth, public school teachers, poor preschool children, adult women trying to improve their education, and mothers of children who have been abandoned by their fathers. What unites this body of work is Gloria's desire to help give voice to the voiceless and to contribute to struggles for equality among all peoples. She has a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh.

Susan Gunther-Mohr, Listening Project Coordinator

Susan has worked exclusively with children and young adults throughout her career as a psychological counselor and teacher. In addition to a private psychological consulting practice, she also runs the after-school activities program she helped to develop at Leland & Gray High School in Townshend, Vermont. Susan's work with youth is characterized by an easy rapport that conveys both an unadulterated pleasure at being with youth and a seriousness about relationships and the mutual respect they demand. Along with coordinating the Listening Project, Susan also filled in as an adult interviewing partner when she was needed. Susan is a Doctor of Ministry and holds a Master's in Theological Studies, both from Boston University.

Sadie Fischesser, Adjunct Researcher

Sadie's research interests throughout her academic life focused on how young people's identifications are tied to institutions they encounter including schools, sports programs and activist organizations. She has experimented with a variety of qualitative methodologies to find ways to empower participants in research and curriculum development. She examined existing statewide research on youth in Vermont and summarized the full research report in this document. For the past several years, Sadie has been working in education-focused non-profit organizations; she is currently the executive director at Windham Child Care Association, hoping to bring the community together to positively impact the lives of young children. Sadie holds a Master's from Boston College and a Doctorate from Syracuse University in Sociology.



What Youth Services Hopes You Heard

Work as partners with youth in planning (in places of worship, in police workshops, in civic organizations, in schools, in government decisions, in workplaces, on boards and committees...)

Extend respect to youth for what they are living through in their lives.

Develop social support networks for youth.

Ban using or thinking “that’s a bad kid.”

Develop with youth safe and fun places they would like to go.

Hire youth as interns, apprentices, part-time employees, and full-time workers; provide summer jobs and chances for youth to gain skills, build self-confidence and earn respect.

Create meaningful relationships with youth; don’t assume that what we presently do is okay or enough.

Create a plan for your organization to deal with youth and youth issues; consider how you might invite youth ideas and youth’s participation in the planning.

What Teens Want Adults to Hear

We want to have more personal relationships with our teachers and administrators.

We want adults to care about us.

We want to be listened to.

We need to be seen as ourselves and not labeled “a bad kid.”

We need adults to be more patient with us.

We need second chances.

We need to be understood.

We need adults to see us as the complex people we are.

For more information on this research, email info@youthservicesinc.org





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