

Effectiveness of a Culturally Specific Sexuality Curriculum on Native Youth

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PURPOSE: To evaluate the effectiveness on high risk Tribal youth of a culturally based abstinence program as measured by a standard questionnaire.

METHODS: A quasi experimental study compared attitudinal and behavioral responses on a standard OAPP questionnaire between an Intervention group of Tribal youth ages 12-17 who received 18 weeks of the cultural curriculum in an after school setting, and a Comparison public school group, of similar age, receiving one semester (15 weeks) of a standard health class. Consecutive groups of youth were treated annually for three years with data analyzed annually and then collapsed to represent a three year period. A 59 item standard OAPP questionnaire was administered each year with section six waived as per the local school board and local questions added. For the analysis, the 59 individual items were collapsed into a framework of three main constructs and ten sub-scales:

1. **Strengthening Families** (sub-scales: Adult Supervision, Adult Relationships)
2. **Strengthening Youth Assets** (sub-scales – Activities, Self-Management, Self-Confidence, Adult Mentor, Setting Future Goals); and
3. **Reducing Sexual Risk** (sub-scales- Dating, Alcohol and Drug Usage, Sexual Risk).

Significance testing (t, F and χ^2) was applied to each annual set of questionnaire responses and the entire three years.

RESULTS: Significant results were found in three of the 10 subscales as follows:

- Intervention group scored higher in setting future goals post intervention. Subscale: Setting Future Goals (p-value <.01)
- Intervention group reported greater self confidence than the Comparisons. Subscale: Self-Confidence (p-value<.05)
- Intervention group felt it would be harder to get a good education in the future if they had sex as a teen. Subscale: Sexual Risk (p-value<.05)

CONCLUSIONS: Tribal high risk youth receiving a culturally based curriculum scored significantly higher than the Comparisons in three of the ten identified subscales: "self confidence", "setting future goals", and "sexual risk". The Comparison group scored at or above the Intervention group in the remaining seven subscales. The strong positive changes seen in the Strengthening Youth Assets Construct while remaining relatively weak in Strengthening Families and Reducing Sexual Risk indicates that this program gave the youth much needed support in finding inner confidence which they had not exhibited early in the intervention but did not extend its influence strongly into the other youth asset constructs. However, given the weak result in the two remaining constructs, it is strongly felt that specific interventions targeting those areas should be carried out, i.e. a project specifically targeting parents or guardians and family relationships. Further investigation is warranted to determine what the magnitude of influence might be of any one of the youth assets on the others looked at in this study. What combination of assets would provide the best defense to discourage engaging in risk behaviors for this population? The literature does not yet have the answers.