

Creating Culturally Grounded Prevention Videos: Defining Moments in the Journey to Collaboration

Leslie Jumper Reeves
Patricia A. Dustman
Lori K. Holleran
Flavio F. Marsiglia

Leslie Jumper Reeves, MA, is Faculty Associate, College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Arizona State University; Logistics Coordinator, Drug Resistance Strategies Project-AZ, and Community Research Liaison, American Indian Youth Project, Arizona State University College of Public Programs, School of Social Work, Phoenix, AZ.

Patricia A. Dustman, EdD, is Project Director, Drug Resistance Strategies Project-AZ, Arizona State University College of Public Programs, School of Social Work, Phoenix, AZ.

Lori K. Holleran, PhD, ACSW, is Associate Professor, The University of Texas at Austin, School of Social Work, Austin, TX.

Flavio F. Marsiglia, PhD, is Distinguished Foundation Professor of Cultural Diversity and Health, Arizona State University School of Social Work, and Director, Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center, School of Social Work, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ.

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Address correspondence to: Leslie Jumper Reeves, Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center, Arizona State University, 411 N. Central Avenue, Suite 720, Phoenix, AZ 85004-0693, USA (E-mail: leslie.reeves@asu.edu).

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ABSTRACT. This article identifies the interactions among a group of high school students, their teachers, and a university research team as they evolve from an adult-directed to a student-led collaboration that resulted in the creation of a set of culturally grounded prevention messages that effectively prevented or delayed the onset of adolescent drug use. Beginning with an overview of the theoretical triad that served as the project's foundation, we describe the processes used to understand the unfolding dynamics within the collaboration and provide a checklist for those who might wish to replicate the collaborative process.

KEYWORDS. Culturally grounded, collaboration, substance abuse prevention, student, video

The *keepin' it REAL* Project is a school-based substance abuse prevention program grounded on students' cultural norms and values. The program teaches students how to recognize risk, value their perceptions and feelings, and make choices that support their values. The *keepin' it REAL* curriculum (Gosin, Marsiglia, & Hecht, 2003) is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and approved as an effective, research-based prevention program, recognized by the National Registry of Effective Programs, and is a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Model Program (Hecht et al., 2003; Kulis, Nieri, Yabiku, Stromwall, & Marsiglia, 2007). This article describes experiences during an experimental venture entitled the Drug Resistance Strategies Project (DRS) that sought to engage high school students in the creation of videotaped drug prevention messages for middle school students (Hecht et al., 2003; Holleran, Reeves, Dustman, & Marsiglia, 2002).

The purpose of the article is to identify and provide analysis for the defining moments in a collaborative effort among researchers, students, and school personnel engaged in a process to create the video component of the curriculum. The objective of the research effort was kids making videos for kids; the challenge was to maintain theoretical soundness within the dynamics of the creative process. Analysis of postsurvey results demonstrates that the program's objectives were more than met (Harthun, Drapeau, Dustman, & Marsiglia, 2002; Kulis et al., 2005).

The success of the kids making videos for kids ideal depended on students' willingness to share their experiences with researchers, and on researchers' willingness to listen and acknowledge the validity of those interactions (Holleran et al., 2002).

PROJECT FOUNDATIONS

Prior research has demonstrated that interventions created by and for mainstream students, based on dominant culture values and beliefs, were not effective when applied to ethnically distinct groups (Forgey, Schinke, & Cole, 1997; Holleran et al., 2002; Kulis, Marsiglia, Nieri, Sicotte, & Hohmann-Marriott, 2004; Marsiglia, Kulis, & Hecht, 2001). Other studies underscored the need for researchers to understand what it means to be a member of an ethnically distinct group before attempting to develop prevention messages for members of those groups (Marsiglia, Miles, Dustman, & Sills, 2002; Napoli, Marsiglia, & Kulis, 2003; Okamoto, Hurdle, & Marsiglia, 2002; Sheets, 2003). Because no evidence-based research had been done with, by, and for adolescents from nondominant groups (Gosin, Dustman, Drapeau, & Harthun, 2003; Schinke, Botvin, & Orlandi, 1991) at the time this project was undertaken, the so-called culturally neutral messages of universal substance abuse prevention efforts ignored the contributions and needs of those students (Holleran, 2003; Hurdle, Okamoto, & Miles, 2002; Marsiglia et al., 2001).

Theoretical Triad

It has been argued that multiple delivery methods are effective for engaging different learning styles, enhancing attention, increasing retention, and initiating motivation (Gardner, 2000; Lawrence 1997). Research also suggests that video components are an effective element of multiple delivery formats (Hecht, Sedano, & Ribeau, 1993). Specifically, video has been proven to be an effective intervention technique for minority youth (Hecht, Corman, & Miller-Rassulo, 1993). Thus, by integrating foundational elements from drama theory, narrative theory, and communication theory of identity, an effective, culturally grounded intervention was created.

Drama Theory

New perceptual frameworks for interpretation of social phenomena and new models of behavior, as advanced in drama theory, suggest that performed messages may be persuasive because they adapt stories in ways that mediate both perception and behavioral choices (Lindlof & Meyer, 1987; Mann, Hecht, & Valentine, 1988). In fact, all forms of performance including music, docudramas, and video, can be employed to enhance the effectiveness of prevention messages. Performances are an

effective medium for altering social attitudes and behaviors (Mann et al., 1988), arguably because performance methodology integrates the five guides of effective substance abuse prevention: attention, comprehension, personal relevance, believability, and acceptability.

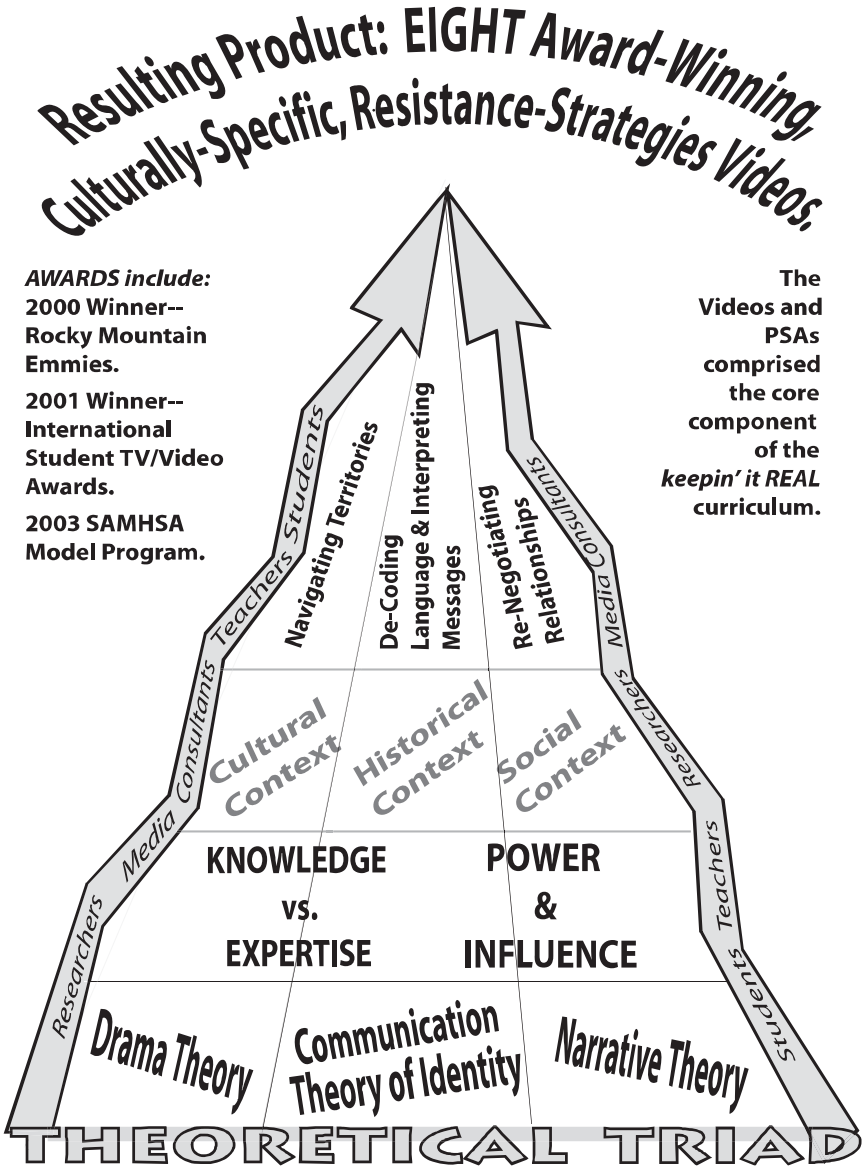
Narrative Theory

Human rationality and communication in all its forms can be understood as narrative (Fisher, 1987). Narratives serve to dispel preset notions of phenomena (Fisher, 1987; Marsiglia & Holleran, 1999) and can be used to model acceptable and appropriate attitudes and behavior. Teaching through narratives allows the transfer of identification and the transformation of learning into behavior changes (Marsiglia & Zorita, 1996). The language a person uses “determines the place of the person in the scheme of the world” and “prefigures personhood” (Littlejohn, 1996, p. xxii). This suggests that what each of us determines as significant, important, and valuable are cultural products absorbed via the language we speak (Collier, Ribeau, & Hecht, 1986; Gergen, 1982). Social interactions, then, teach us our identity, which is reflected and continually reinforced through performance and language (Dervin, Grossberg, O’Keefe, & Wartella, 1989; Mead, 1934). When considered within this framework, the varied communication norms of diverse ethnic groups can be utilized to create effective prevention messages (Collier et al., 1986; Hecht, Ribeau, & Sedano, 1990), when care is taken to acknowledge that understanding “requires more than learning the norms and values of the speech community in which [a message] is delivered” (Hymes, 1972, p. 54). Thus, the constructs of narrative theory provided the structure needed to examine meaning and interpretation as defined by the student participants.

Communication Theory of Identity

Drug resistance strategies are situational. In fact, the resistance process may be so varied as to be specific to the substance being offered. For instance, studies have found situational differences between alcohol resistance strategies and strategies used to resist other drugs, leading to an assumption that the strategies used to resist other problematic social influences will differ from those employed to resist drug use offers (Alberts, Hecht, Miller-Rassulo, & Krizek, 1992). To address this issue, a multidimensional approach based on the communication theory of identity directed the development of the video production methodology (see Figure 1). The

FIGURE 1. Theoretical Triad



theory examines the ways individuals speak about their membership in particular groups as a way to clarify their individual, or personal, identities (Hecht et al., 2002), and is particularly useful here because it recognizes the impact of socioeconomic and contextual factors on a group's shared sense of identity (e.g., tradition, ancestry, language).

Applying the Triad

Collaborators sought to determine which combination of elements from the group member's cultural heritage (e.g., values, beliefs, customs) contributed to his or her interpretation of a particular phenomenon. Those determinants drew from the strengths embedded within the cultural structures of the diverse participants (Dervin et al., 1989; Phillipsen, 1989). A checklist was developed to ensure that important structures were considered individually rather than in an aggregate manner that might forestall diversity in the representations.

Knowing the Audience

Existing research demonstrated that the authority structures in place in schools promoted the school culture itself, serving to confine students to the low end of the authority ladder (Marsiglia et al., 2001). Students, in most instances, identified and managed authority structures embedded in the project organization (Pescosolido, 2001; Sheets, 2003) and were usually willing to operate within process boundaries when they knew what was expected of them. Successful adult–student collaborative efforts require an especially strong focus on shared meaning and social action (Wilson, 2000).

Adult–Child Communication

Adults are not often accustomed to validating kids' talk about their own lives, thus researcher bias and social judgment may combine to affect validation and interpretation of that information adversely (Kulis, Napoli, & Marsiglia, 2002). Indeed, everyone (researchers included) interprets events according to his or her own established schema rather than from others' perspectives (Foucault, 1970; Karakowsky & McBey, 2001). Investigators acknowledged that their interpretations of what they observed might differ significantly from the meanings students attached to the same phenomenon (Forgey et al., 1997; Hurdle, Okamoto, & Miles, 2002; Muller, 2000).

Culturally Grounded Prevention Messages

The shift toward cultural sensitivity in prevention research was spurred by recognition that a group's narratives could provide the basis for creating culturally grounded messages appropriate to diverse populations. Because narratives are linked to membership in speech communities (Holleran, 2003; Nikitina, 2003), language provided an arena in which actions were justified by citing reasons that were meaningful to community members.

THE PARTICIPANTS

A communications and fine arts magnet high school, located in a major southwestern city within a neighborhood targeted for the intervention, was recruited as the production center for the video creation part of the project. The lead teacher was enthusiastic about participating for two reasons: students would become immersed in the creation process, and the end product would represent students' neighborhoods. The research team and the lead teacher recruited other teachers and professional media consultants to help. A meeting was held to explain the scope of the project and to emphasize the key concept of kids making videos for kids.

DATA COLLECTION: THE VIDEO PRODUCTION PROCESS

The project goal was to facilitate students' creation of a set of culturally grounded prevention messages for middle school adolescents based on three informed assumptions: (a) adolescents are using drugs at earlier ages than ever before; (b) culturally neutral messages are ineffective with minority groups; and (c) peer-created, reality-based messages are much better received than adult-created instructional messages. In synthesis, the project's overarching goal was to produce a multipart, video-based, substance abuse prevention presentation created from (and consistent with) the students' own experiences, voices, and visions (see Table 1).

Once themes were identified and agreed on, students split into self-selected teams and began scriptwriting. One of the first challenges they encountered concerned the need for Spanish translations of their scripts that would become the core messages for the videos. The conflict emphasized the difference between "school" Spanish and "life" Spanish that Latino students and their families used every day. Students were frustrated when directed to replace the

TABLE 1. Ethnic Values Identified as Predominant in Non-Latino (European American), Latino, and African American Cultures

Non-Latino values	Latino values	African-American values
<p><i>Individualism:</i> stress what people are able to do for themselves as honorable, honor individual strengths, goals, victories</p> <p><i>Planning and Goals:</i> having a purpose in life to get ahead and setting priorities accordingly</p> <p><i>Respect:</i> valuing people's boundaries</p>	<p><i>Family Orientation (familismo):</i> value in trusting entire network; family/extended family valued as center of social support, solidarity; family not limited to blood relatives</p> <p><i>Action Orientation:</i> <i>emphasis on evidence of one's intentions through their actions</i></p> <p><i>Respect (respeto):</i> giving deference to persons of status or acknowledging their position, avoiding humiliation of others or direct public confrontation</p>	<p><i>Communalism:</i> interdependence; strong family orientation; role flexibility, sacrificing or adapting one's own wishes/agenda for the good of the group or family; inclusiveness</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> doing things for a reason; value in hard work in achieving a goal</p> <p><i>Respect:</i> respecting the accomplishments of others; honoring the family and elders; taking into account the feelings of others, affective orientation</p>

<p><i>Directness in communication:</i> Being assertive and sure of one's self in communication, direct eye contact</p>	<p><i>Personal Treatment (personalismo):</i> preference for being treated on a personal basis rather than according to categories, rules, policy</p>	<p><i>Endurance:</i> value in endurance and persistence in the face of adversity</p>
<p><i>Fair Game:</i> preference not to be singled out, playing by the rules, objectivity valued</p>	<p><i>Niceness (simpatica):</i> creating pleasure in others by actions, kindness and grace in personal treatment, regardless of persons</p>	<p><i>Creativity:</i> expressing oneself through music, dance, or other forms of expressive presentation; importance of the oral tradition</p>
<p>(Adapted from J. H. Katz, The Sociopolitical Nature of Counseling, <i>The Counseling Psychologist</i>, 13, pp. 615–624, 1985; and G.F. Cavanagh, <i>American Business Values</i>, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1990.)</p>	<p>(Adapted from R. S. Mayers, B. L. Kail, and T.D. Watts, <i>Hispanic Substance Abuse</i>, Springfield, Illinois: C.C. Thomas, 1993.)</p>	<p>(Adapted from R. W. Denby, Resiliency and the African American Family: A Model of Family Preservation, <i>The Black Family</i>, S.L. Logan, (ed.), Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, pp. 144–163, 1996.</p>

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Spanish dialogue they had written with the more formal Castilian Spanish—not used in common practice in Mexican and Mexican American families—or an anglicized hybrid of Spanish and English. One group of scriptwriting students complained, and tried to explain:

Student J: We've got to change these lines [back] to English!

Researcher: Why?

Student Z: [Our teacher] said . . . There's too much Spanish.

Researcher: What do you think?

Student J: (shrugging) That's how *we* talk.

Student A: (explaining) We have them talking Spanish at the beginning when body language translates what they're saying anyway . . .

but [our teacher] said we had to do some of it, like, in *Spanglish*

Student J: That won't work! If we're going to put any of that in, it'll have to be from one of the kids.

Student Z: Grownups don't do [talk like] that

Researcher: But [will] people who don't speak Spanish . . . know what's going on?

Student A: Yeah, we think they will. But we're changing it anyway.¹

Moreover, Mexican Spanish conflicted with what the research team believed should be portrayed in the products for schools (e.g., formal Spanish grammar). Students' expertise about their own language was all too often ignored. On occasion, though, the research team got it right, as when adult leaders allowed students to change the program's Spanish version logo to more accurately reflect how Latino adolescents actually used their language. Students suggested changing *manteniendolo real* to *recuerda real* because *recuerda* invites listeners to actively remember the strategies, whereas *manteniendolo* is a past-tense word that means "I remember." The debate over appropriate language choices permeated all aspects of the video production.

VIDEO PRODUCTION TIMELINE

The video *The Ride* was filmed with a professional media consultant serving as the primary decision maker. Due to adult influence, this video was judged by the students to be the least culturally relevant of the eight episodes created. The production of *Ain't No Game* followed quickly thereafter, but this time more experienced student crews were willing to interact assertively

with the media consultant. The Spanish translations, however, proved problematic again. Writers for the Spanish version of the *Why Not?* video (*¿Por Que No?*) insisted on it being cast with students selected from the high school's student body. Inclusion of these students—many actually represented the cultures being portrayed—facilitated a shift of power in the students' favor. This, in turn, led to more students assuming various aspects of responsibility for the videos. With new enthusiasm, student teams whose membership represented the diverse cultures of their urban neighborhoods developed concepts for story lines, and then transformed those scenarios into filmable plots. They argued about which stories best represented the strategies, then focused on writing dialogue that would illustrate those strategies. Spanish translation was, as usual, a sticking point. This time, however, script-writing teams convincingly argued for integration of their everyday language and, as a result, their expertise was acknowledged. Other students also successfully challenged the language structures imposed on their scripts, resulting in more realistic dialogue.

Emboldened by their increased decision-making control of *Why Not?* students became even more actively involved in the talent recruiting and selection processes. They knew which of the auditioning students' mannerisms, personalities, and abilities would facilitate realization of the visions they had for their videos (see Table 2). As one screenwriter described the characters she envisioned for her video, "We have some characters that are kind of *gang-y*, and I think it would be a stereotype to just have guy gangers. I like her [an auditioning student] for that part, and there's another girl that tried out just before her. I like her for the other part."

Locating the originally Anglicized video *The Barbeque* to a home in the scriptwriters' neighborhood enabled the video to be transformed (and renamed *Fiesta*) into a culturally accurate portrayal of students' experiences. For this story, cultural representation was, again, a sticking point. One of the researchers attempted to veto a character that students had written into their script because he believed the character would foster a negative stereotype. In contrast, the scriptwriters viewed the character as a realistic portrait of a family member:

Researcher: Why'd you write in the drunk uncle?

Student J: (laughing) 'Cause there's always one there!

Researcher: Do you think it will create a negative stereotype?

Student A: No. He's going to be funny

Student Z: That's where lots of kids are exposed to drinking, from family get-togethers.

Storyboarding	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
Spanish Translation II	+	+	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	++
Location Scouting and Selection II	0	0	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	++	++
Filming Session II										
"Fiesta"	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	-	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	++
"The Dream"	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	-	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	++
"Breakin' Bad Habits"	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	-	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	++
Logo & Artwork Field Test	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	++	++
Logo Redesign	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	0	++	++
Logo Approval	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++
Computer Enhancing Work	0	0	+	+	-	-	+/-	+/-	++	++
Sequencing Takes	0	0	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	++	++
Creative Editing	0	0	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	++	++
Technical Editing	0	0	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	++	++
"Schoolyard Menace"	++	+/-	++	++	+	+	+	+	-	-

Note: The Symbols used in the table and their meanings are as follows: (+) = superficial control; (++) = real control; (+++) = absolute control; (+/-) = situational control; (-) = no control or status in the process; (0) = did not participate.

Teacher: Isn't it a stereotype, though?

Student Z: No.

Researcher: Describe him

Student J: He's good looking, and dressed neat, and funny, but he drinks too much.

Researcher: I was seeing a scraggly guy pushing a shopping basket

Student A: No, he's not like that . . .

Researcher: So, you think your message needs the uncle?

Student Z: They have to decide if they want to take after him.

Researcher: Who?

Student A: All the kids

Student J: He's kind of the black sheep of the family but you never disrespect him because everybody's got a relative like him; always off drunk somewhere.

Student A: If you disrespect him, your mom or dad would be real mad at you.

Student J: He's, like, your Mom's brother or something. You know, everybody knows, how he acts hurts your family. Your family is disappointed in him and you don't want to follow after him.

The students made a convincing case for including the character. Their explanation revealed their greater understanding of the complex juxtaposition among family relationships, self-respect, and respect for elders. Interestingly, the uncle stayed in the video and, for the first time, the students exercised situational control over the casting of the characters.

Even before the video wrapped, students involved in the *Dream Theme* initiated the necessary computer graphic overlays and chose their music tracks. Unlike the first videos, students did not ask permission to pursue their visions. They just did it.

While filming *Breakin' Bad Habits*, the professional director taught the students how to achieve the effects they desired, rather than limiting instruction to the technical aspects of operating the camera. Students now immersed in both creation and production began to recognize the importance of different directorial styles on the power and influence of their knowledge and expertise. Students actively pursued roles in preparing the final version of each video. They determined which scenes stayed and which ones dropped to the cutting room floor. They exercised directorial freedom in creative decisions, sound tracks, and technical editing, asking only for guidance on how, not permission for what:

Student Z is on camera, Student A is listening to sound bites. Student J is keeping the student screen-testers moving. These students appear to be completely focused on their assigned tasks. Student G is intently studying a page of notes, making adjustments on some kind of sound equipment. Everyone seems enthused to be here. It's busy, but peaceful again today. Student Z leans over to tell Student A to make a note, referring to a previous conversation about making the video match their vision [as screenwriters].

This process produced two complete sets of videos—a Latino and a multicultural version—to support the *keepin' it REAL* curriculum, and two sets of public service announcements.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

DRS researchers examined all the video ethnographic data, field notes, correspondence, and document artifacts that were compiled during the video creation process to analyze the process dynamics that occurred within each production phase. Guided by methods used by Holleran et al. (2002), analysts coded the video footage, field notes, memos, and e-mail correspondence to identify occasions when observable changes in student discourse, adult–student interactions, written correspondence, expressed attitudes, and observable behaviors led to genuine changes in procedures. Four analysts, two participant observers, and two external sources coded the data to determine whether or not the products represented the goal of kids making videos for kids while also illustrating culturally valid strategies for each group. Using triangulation and constant comparison, researchers limited their focus to those interactions that prompted procedural changes that transformed student roles because of altered perceptions of expertise, accompanied by observable changes in adult roles.

Each analyst was charged with rating the illustrative value of interactions using the standard of observable changes in student behaviors, discourse, attitudes, and role responsibility. Coders' ratings were compared to establish interrater reliability. This combination of member check and external observer ratings offered a comprehensive view of interpretations and served to validate or disconfirm the interpretations emerging from the data analysis process.

Initial coding identified five distinct categories winding throughout the data sets. With further analysis, the categories were collapsed into three

distinct themes (i.e., language, territory, relationships) that illuminated an understanding of multiple facets of the video production process. Within this context, the defining moments embedded in this collaborative process unfolded, and the role transitions emerged.

Retrospective analysis permitted consideration of the data by participants, participant observers, and uninvested analysts. As a result, previously unidentified process dynamics were recognized. This article illustrates the subtle, predominantly unintentional methods that adult project directors used to retain control of the project while proclaiming the value of a student-designed and student-controlled process. Notwithstanding that contradiction, descriptions of the production phases demonstrate the variety of adaptations made by both adults and students to accomplish the actual transfer of control of the production to the students, even as each group struggled to balance notions of power and influence with knowledge and expertise. Achieving that goal was contingent on adult members of the team being willing and able to surrender control of the project to the students; to become facilitators, rather than directors.

A social phenomenological approach to the analysis was purposefully grounded in a theoretical triad encompassing distinct yet overlapping themes of (a) language and communication, (b) social and cultural, and (c) historical context (see Figure 1). Rather than assuming understanding of what something meant to the student participants, a hermeneutic model adapted from Geertz (1973) was used to identify and segregate researcher assumptions and beliefs that the team brought to the observation situation. Analysts explored the complex issues of: (a) language and communication, especially regarding mastery and use of the dominant language and the social construction of meaning; (b) organization and social action, especially related to different cultural perceptions and expectations regarding personal and institutional territory; and, (c) adult–student relationships related to preconceived notions of expert, novice, and power differentials imbedded in those notions.

DEFINING MOMENT 1: DECODING LANGUAGE AND MESSAGES

In an atmosphere of confusion and increasing hostility, frustration over ambiguous directions regarding how each strategy should be demonstrated coalesced with one student's exclamation, "Just tell us what *leave* is

supposed to look like and we'll do it!" Analysts wondered if participants all used the same working definitions for the key terms. Close inspection of the data revealed the disparate understandings each group brought to the process. Emotional statements peppered throughout the field notes and reports illustrated how working definitions had not been established, and that descriptions of behaviors representative of each of the strategies had not been defined. Furthermore, the data indicated that researchers should not have assumed that students understood and shared the researchers' definitions of common terms. Operational terms as defined in the project (e.g., drug offers) often differed significantly from how kids understood those terms. Researchers learned that beer and alcohol are not considered drugs in some cultures. While conducting interviews for the *Why Not?* video, for example, one of the student interviewers asked her informant:

Interviewing student: Do you have any stories about being offered drugs?

Responding student: No. (pause) I've never been offered drugs.

Teacher: You just said you were offered marijuana at a party!

Responding student: Yeah, but that's not like, *real* drugs (emphasis added).

Researcher: What are *real* drugs?

Responding student: You can die from those. Smack, meth . . . like that.

In a different conversation, two Latina students explained their understanding of the difference between beer and alcohol, grounded within their culture:

Student J: Beer and wine, aren't, like, you know, really drinking

Student A: In our families, when you're grown up [these girls were both 14 years old], you might get offered a beer or some wine.

We stay together, and even if a kid drinks and the parents didn't offer it, or weren't there right then, they probably won't be in too much trouble if they were drinking with their family.

These and all other conceptualized understandings were examined with dissimilarities noted to devise a set of consensual definitions that could more accurately check for shared understanding and diffuse miscommunication. It became clear that those responsible for decoding language and terms must do so specifically.

Interpersonal interactions and the interpretation of verbal messages were no less affected. The challenges associated with verbal interactions,

the complexities embedded in language, the social construction of meaning, and the origins of shared meaning were visible challenges to collaboration.

Students received powerful nonverbal messages as well. In one instance, media professionals disregarded the cultural expertise students brought to the project, requiring them to watch the Hollywood version of Mexican American culture, as represented in the movies *La Vida Loca* and *You Like It Like That*. Students were offended. Besides being too young to view R-rated movies, they knew what their own lives were about and were able to describe in great detail the authentic Mexican American experience that was to be portrayed in the videos. Although unable to define it in academic terms, when granted the authority to do so, the students were able to create authentic cultural scenarios representative of their own life experiences.

DEFINING MOMENT 2: NAVIGATING TERRITORIES

Within the data, two distinct meanings for *territory* emerged, both of which became relevant in the analysis. The first, geographic location, was illustrated clearly in student comparisons of a Mexican house versus a white house when choosing a realistic filming location. This meaning of territory also became apparent in examinations of how interactions and power differentials changed if the interaction occurred on school grounds or in the students' neighborhoods. Geographic territory emerged as a powerful influence on student behavior and willingness to take control of the process. However, both applications of territory occurred simultaneously, often with intersecting influences.

The second generalized meaning for territory was labeled as social and structural: the area over which individuals have control. This territory issue emerged in final decision-making processes that occurred during scriptwriting, casting, and mandates to use prior research. As pointed out by one student, "I thought you said this hadn't ever been done before! So, how can we make it match *prior research*?" (Reeves, 1998).

Moreover, within the social-cultural territory, two types of interactions were noted. The first was connected to issues of perceived expertise often attributed to age, ethnicity, and gender. The second was often determined

by social status or power, both historically related to access to knowledge. As noted by Sell, Knottnerus, Ellison, and Mundt (2000), “[A]ctors use any status characteristic that differentiates them to structure observable power and prestige” (p. 455). Members gave cues for ordering influence or territory (power) and, important for our purposes, these cues or protocols were often irrelevant to the task.

Social-cultural territories, grounded in existing structural issues, also posed challenges. Students were offended when outsiders referred to their neighborhoods as “bad.” Following a well-publicized disturbance at the school, one of the media professionals stated, “I know you’re all anxious to leave this place far behind” (Reeves, 1998). In response, two African American students commented:

Student M: Everybody act like somethin’ wrong with us not bein’ in a big hurry to get outta here soon as we can! Why’d I wanna leave?! This a good neighborhood! Ever’body know me here. I go in the store, somebody gonna ask me ’bout my grandmother, tell me they know’d me since I was this high. Not watch me like I’m fixin’ ta steal somethin’.

Student D: . . . say “it’s a bad neighborhood” ’cause of gangs and such. I can tell you, they’s gangs in them rich neighborhoods, too. Say it’s dangerous down here. I don’t ever feel scared. Only people oughta feel scared is those that don’t belong here.

Power and Influence

Nearly all definable elements of power and influence were situated within social and structural territories, leading to conflicts between local and distant participants. Distance between the lead researcher and the student production teams led to directorial conflicts. Especially at the beginning of the project, academic partners, teachers, and media professionals used e-mail and fax correspondence to stay abreast of the myriad activities. This practice, however, excluded students from decision making. For instance, scripts that had been developed and approved at the local level were rejected by out-of-state project developers, then returned to the students with terse instructions for revisions. Students receiving these secondhand directions were unable to seek clarification, ask questions, or argue their points of view, prompting an e-mail complaint from one of the scriptwriting students:

We don't talk through a computer like you do. Don't fax us a list of changes, either. Send someone out to tell us what you want. So "middleman miscommunication" can be avoided. Send a real person so we can explain our decisions, what we think, and our choices *before our words get erased* [emphasis added].

There were times when everyone was confused about the scope of power and control, of expert and novice, and of responsibility and authority. For example, teacher e-mails contained comments such as, "That script was approved back when we thought you wanted *us* to make these videos!" and "What's the point, if we only have to change it?"

The students perceived that project authorities *directed* their teachers (and them, as a result) to make the script changes, and they resented it. The students reminded the research team that *they* were supposed to be making the decisions and were doing what the project had hired them to do. One student noted, "They aren't listening to what we have to say and they're changing things when we are ready to film . . . making arbitrary changes well after the time we have set for making those decisions."

DEFINING MOMENT 3: RESTRUCTURING RELATIONSHIPS

Cohen and Lotan (1997) showed that students who were actively engaged in classroom discussions demonstrated improved academic performance. Other research indicated that the hierarchal arrangement of who talks when (teacher or authority to student or novice) elevates mainstream, authority-wielding members, having "a silencing effect on Mexican American students" (Losey, 1997, p. 195). This dynamic was clearly observed during the initial stages of the process.

Expert Versus Novice

Adolescents who work with adults are not accustomed to being considered experts in anything (Watson, Johnson, & Merritt, 1998, cited in Karakowsky & McBey, 2001). Student "expectations of [their own] future performance . . . [are] based on previous experiences and statuses that are significant in the larger society" (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980, p. 480). Before beginning *Breakin' Bad Habits*, one student discussed his role in creating an elective, break dancing class. Researchers'

interest in his initiative prompted him to take charge of creating a realistic break dancing video. To do so, he enlisted his crew, who assumed a wide range of responsibilities, although steadfastly deferring to his authority in all matters related to production of the video. The following illustrates the importance of other project participants' perception of this student's authority and expertise:

On Friday from 4:30–6:30 nothing happened. The breakers practiced dancing, and the other students watched. R, who is the student in charge of the *Breakin'* video, was not there, and the students who had been recruited to appear in the video were not responsive to [the teacher] who was urging them to “get down to business.” One said, “My Homie [R] ain't here,” and that settled it for all of them. The other four breakers nodded their assent, totally ignoring [the teacher]. The breakers got quiet for a few minutes, then went back to joking around with each other. Clearly nothing was going to happen without R's guidance.

The crew never considered making decisions in this student's absence. In fact, his relationship with both students and adults was so credible that he determined the location, the cast, and the story line, and directed the filming of the video. The visibility of his expert leadership demonstrated to other students that they could do the same.

During the production of *Fiesta* (see Table 2), students took control of the creative process, taking both responsibility and command of the production. They reviewed each scene of the video as it was being filmed, making sure that the final product reflected their images of authentic elements of their Mexican American culture.

Fiesta is being filmed at M's uncle and aunt's house. Her mother is playing the part of the aunt in the video, and she doesn't speak in our presence, except when she talks to M. It's enlightening to see how confident M is, directing her mom and uncle in the kitchen scene, and telling the director where the camera should go.

Power Differentials

Although a preliminary script existed for *The Dream*, students had a vision of what they could create by combining their skills in visual representations—skills and talents that none of the adults working on the project possessed. One student sketched out a variety of camera

treatments and enlisted a friend from drama class to act out the lead role. A second student took over the task of transferring much of the action to video animation. Neither of them asked permission; rather, only as an afterthought did they approach the professional media consultant with the revised script and computer animations (see Table 2). The transformation of roles allowed student input to emerge as the most important aspect of creating authentic, culturally rich illustrations for each video scenario.

From the *Fiesta* experience onward, student producers suddenly seemed to realize that they possessed both the knowledge and expertise to produce videos that truly represented their own life experiences. Almost simultaneously, one student team took control of casting for the *Schoolyard Menace* video and another student team changed the concept for *The Dream*, assuming responsibility for the creative design of the final version. With each video, the production process became increasingly student initiated, student driven, and student directed (see Table 2). These transformations resulted in restructured student–adult relationships.

As the relationships among student and adult participants changed, participants' redefinitions of their own and others' roles became evident in their interactions (see Table 2). Increasingly, participants demonstrated an ongoing renegotiation of their roles based on expert or novice status. Over time it became apparent that individual levels of expertise were being evaluated on the basis of abilities and skills, rather than age, culture, or gender considerations.

DISCUSSION OF THE TRANSFORMED COLLABORATION

Important deductions emerged at each phase of the analysis and added insight to what took place at each step. Researchers' deeper understandings of interactions led to expanded interpretations of context. Discussion of context and constant comparison of insights led to clarification of individual as well as group perspectives, and emphasized the need to adopt a chronological view to illustrate the progression of transformations, and the importance of each.

There must be a transfer of both authority and responsibility to participants if genuine collaboration is to occur. Participants' perceptions of who holds both authority and responsibility control the outcomes for everyone. Those in a position of power must *give* opportunity, first, for others to *have* the opportunity (and the authority) to take responsibility.

Researchers and participants must recognize that territory resides in two arenas—geography and personal interactions. All participants must understand and attend to both verbal and nonverbal interactions. One most illuminating realization was that personal territory changed based on the social structure of the interaction regardless of the territory. Throughout the analysis, data showed that successful participation, as part of geographic territory, promotes the self-efficacy of participants (Karakowsky & McBey, 2001).

What cannot be overstated in importance is that recognition of participant abilities demands that researchers ultimately relinquish control, responsibility, and authority when participant expertise is greater. As one of the university participants summed it up, “If you really want what you say you want, then, when ownership transfers, you cannot construct new barriers.”

Researchers undertaking collaborative efforts should recognize that both researchers and participants will struggle with changes in expert-to-novice role perceptions, especially as reversals in those roles emerge and as participants become more involved in project ownership (Pescosolido, 2001). In collaborative efforts that involve youth participants, adults must take primary responsibility for deliberately eliciting participant feedback and for responding thoughtfully to changes in roles based on embedded and acquired expertise. For any type of collaboration to succeed, both researchers and participants must challenge their presumptions (and assumptions) about the social construction of the collaboration.

The defining moments illustrated the transformation of the collaboration from an adult-directed to a student-driven process. Table 2 illustrates the progression of role transformations from adults assuming expert status and youth being relegated to novice, followed by adult realization that students had assumed responsibility for the success of the project, and clearly had begun to demonstrate their expertise in the various production areas. Table 2 also illustrates changes over time, thereby providing a view of both the sequence of project segments and the emergence of students as experts.

Finally, comparison of the process dynamics present at the beginning of the project with the status of relationships when the final video was wrapped demonstrates that most of the troublesome issues of process and perspective had been alleviated, if not eliminated completely. The corrective efforts described in this report led to improved relationships among all participants. More important, perhaps, the improved collaborative interactions produced eight authentic, culturally grounded videos to enhance the *keepin' it REAL* curriculum, each containing effective prevention messages for adolescents.

IMPLICATIONS: RECHARTING THE COURSE OF COLLABORATION

Final analysis of the process included determining what was learned and what changes and adjustments would be necessary, given a third opportunity. Instances of miscommunication and the absence of guideposts were considered. As expected, issues of power and influence permeated every interaction. Disagreements emerging from knowledge and expertise conflicts were regularly subjects of renegotiation. As a result, measures of success were identified that could be used to monitor a collaborative effort (see Figure 2).

Language

When faced with differing definitions, those in power must relinquish their preset definitions in favor of negotiated meanings that reflect participant knowledge of the culture being studied. The importance of negotiated meanings resides in the success of identifying the relationship between the objectives of the project and the messages actually delivered to the participants. Both verbal and nonverbal interactions must be acknowledged and valued. Throughout the analysis, data showed that successful participation promoted the self-efficacy of participants.

Territories

Participants understand that researchers may be experts within academic cultures but, when it comes to their own neighborhoods and communities, the participants possess a greater understanding of interactions and expectations, especially within understudied populations. Those undertaking collaborative research efforts should recognize that both researchers and participants will struggle with changes in expert-to-novice role perceptions, especially as participant experts emerge and become more involved in project ownership.

Relationships

In collaborative efforts that involve youth participants, adults must take primary responsibility for deliberately eliciting participant feedback and for responding thoughtfully to role changes. For collaborative efforts of any type to be successful, both researchers and participants must challenge their presumptions (and assumptions) about the social construction of the collaboration. In this article, specific emphasis has been placed on the

FIGURE 2. Measures of Success Checklist

Use the following to schedule a progression of stages that will enhance the possibility of collaborative project success.

_____ Using a general description of the concept of the project, participants and researchers jointly create behavioral definitions for key terms.

_____ Participants and researchers forge consensus on the problem statement.

_____ Researchers define their initial roles and describe how they expect those roles to change over time.

_____ Participants and researchers identify steps needed to accomplish each objective in an action plan format.

_____ The group creates a list of participants who will serve as the “pool of experts” for project objectives by asking participants to identify the strengths that they can offer to accomplish the various objectives listed in the action plans.

_____ The group identifies the “experts” for the tasks within each action plan, and consciously invites/encourages those who are interested (not just skilled) to become members of the Action Teams.

_____ The researchers identify the strengths of each team member and decide which researchers should serve as the support/resource person for each Action Team.

_____ Action teams identify all locations that meet the criteria, and then decide which locations to should be used for each objective.

_____ Action teams create logistical criteria for an environment that meets the objectives of their responsibilities.

_____ Participants who have demonstrated leadership and/or expertise have both the authority and responsibility to make decisions that direct the achievement of the project objective.

_____ Participants demonstrate behaviors consistent with the behavioral objectives, including the assumption of leadership and ownership of team actions and outcomes.

_____ All narrative data are considered as valuable as statistical data, and are considered at all levels of the project analysis.

_____ All stages of data analysis include a “member check” to ensure that representations constructed in the research environment reflect participant data, commentary, and culture.

defining moments experienced by student participants that, as documented in the observational data, led to changing behaviors demonstrated by all participants in the process. As this diverse group of students debated and determined the most crucial elements of culture and aligned behaviors to include in the scenarios, they also defined them for the adults, a process often absent from existing literature related to prevention messages.

RECOMMENDATIONS: BENCHMARKS AND REALITY CHECKS

For researchers who are considering or undertaking collaborative research, we offer several recommendations. First and foremost, we cannot overstate the importance of focusing on the process itself; we believe that an emphasis on process is key to future application of any participatory collaborative effort. We believe that effective replication would rest on close adherence to procedural steps and their measures. Any population, diverse or otherwise, should consider those cultural elements that are imperative to a successful collaboration. As a result, the checklist of process-driven benchmarks included here identifies measures of success (see Figure 2) that we believe should be the goal of any collaboration.

In any group process there will be some degree of miscommunication stemming from different—sometimes even contradictory—meanings associated with the same words. When collaborating with those who are significantly dissimilar (e.g., by ethnicity, age, gender, or social status), researchers should proactively challenge their assumed understanding of meanings that participants attach to all key concepts and operational terms. These discussions will often lead researchers to an understanding of some previously taken-for-granted element of the others' culture, worldview, or experiences.

Territory is an important consideration for all members of a collaborative team. Researchers, then, should conduct project activities within the participants' social structures. Geographic places where participants have experienced power and success promote participant commitment to productive outcomes of project activities.

Role changes and transformations are a natural progression of any collaborative project. The more involved individual team members become, the more each learns about and reflects on the processes embedded in producing a final outcome. Be on the alert for, and aware of, participant reactions to role changes as the activities of the project move forward. Embrace those changes as elements that will ensure project success. Researchers might find it helpful, at the inception of the collaboration, to discuss actively how roles are expected to change based on emerging leadership and demonstrated abilities. They might wish to describe the envisioned project and ask participants to describe the best process to accomplish the objectives.

Participant perceptions of expert and novice are unconsciously integrated into all project phases, and then magnified by culture and cultural

differences. Researchers must be encouraged to respond positively and proactively to participant recognition of experts among their peers. This awareness can prove beneficial for designing adult–student collaborations and academic–community participant interactions. Researchers must trust participant judgment about identifying experts, and support those experts.

At all junctures of data analysis, researchers must aggressively challenge all previously held assumptions about the participants and their cultures, encouraging team members to discuss assumptions that were in place at the design and implementation stages of each phase. Question whether or not, over time, evidence supported those assumptions. Finally, when evaluating outcomes, researchers must ensure that participant experience is viewed with the equitable empirical credence normally assigned to statistical data.

NOTE

1. All quoted data are retrieved from field notes compiled by Reeves and Tapia in NIDA-funded R01-DA-05629-05A1 study. See References for complete citations.

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