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Perspectives of 4-H Professionals: Practices to Engage Immigrant Youth in 4-H Teens as Teachers Programs

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Perspectives of 4-H Professionals: Practices to Engage Immigrant Youth in 4-H Teens as Teachers Programs

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Immigrant youth in the United States face historical and systemic challenges in American schools. Out-of-school mentoring programs, such as the 4-H Teenagers as Teachers model, have a positive impact on diverse youth outcomes. This qualitative study presents practices associated with engaging immigrant youth as teachers in urban 4-H youth development programs. Purposeful sampling identified 11 4-H professionals from three regions: West, Midwest, and Northeast. Five professionals are immigrants, and six are of White European descent. Building on the essential elements of teenagers as teachers programs and immigrant mentoring research, 4-H professionals indicated that cultural competence, including empathy and commitment to immigrant teens, is essential. They regard English language acquisition, acculturation, and support of youth and family well-being as critical components of culturally relevant mentoring. Study findings translate into recommendations for positive immigrant youth-adult mentorships practices that youth development program educators are encouraged to operationalize based on local interests, needs, and resources.

Keywords: immigrant adolescents, out-of-school, teenagers as teachers

Globalization is about the movement of capital, production and distribution, populations, and cultures (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Globalization generates an unprecedented enrollment of children of immigrants in American schools and in youth development organizations. Hence, the education of immigrant youth should be understood within these transnational spaces opened up by globalization that shape children's life trajectories and options for the future (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Immigrant youth are a heterogeneous population, and they reflect multiple family origins, racial and ethnic backgrounds, migration histories, and home languages. For example, some immigrant youth come from educated backgrounds, others have experienced intermittent disruptions in their education, and some youth have not experienced literacy beyond their indigenous language. Some are escaping political, religious, or ethnic persecution. Others are motivated by the opportunity of better jobs and education. Some arrive in the United States as documented migrants, while others cross the border as undocumented migrants. Some youth arrive with family members or extended families, and other youth arrive as unaccompanied minors (Oberoi, 2016). Immigrant youth settle in rural, suburban, and urban communities in the

United States and have varied household incomes. Some migrate from city to city, or state to state in search of better opportunities, while others stay in the same region (Batalova et al., 2021). Thus, the needs and outcomes of immigrant youth will vary according to their histories and trajectories. The term “immigrant” refers to individuals residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. Refugees are a subset of the immigrant population and make up a relatively small proportion of the U.S. immigrant population. Refugee youth and their families are unable to go home in the face of persecution. Immigrants and their U.S.-born children were approximately 85.7 million people or 26% of the U.S. population. Children and youth ages 5 to 17 comprised 5% of immigrants and 18% of the U.S.-born population (Batalova et al., 2021).

Second-generation children are born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent, accounting for 88% (15.6 million) of all children under age 18. The remaining 12% (2.2 million) were born outside the United States (Batalova et al., 2021). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) assert second-generation youth are often raised in home settings where the heritage culture is strong. Immigrant youth and second-generation children often face historical and systemic challenges in American schools as they negotiate cultural discrepancies between their home, school, and youth program environments (Kim et al., 2018).

Immigrant youth and second-generation youth make up a large population group, highlighting the importance of efforts to improve youth’s overall well-being. In recent years, Latinx immigrant youth have demonstrated increases in educational attainment, yet they still fall behind their White counterparts in social and economic indicators (Foxen & Mather, 2016). In general, Asian and Pacific Islander immigrant youth fare better than Latinx immigrant youth (Enchautegui, 2014). A strategy to support immigrant youth in culturally responsive ways is to involve adults in youth’s lives through mentoring that can begin to address these gaps (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Educational and youth development programs often experience challenges in providing culturally responsive programming, even when studies have shown the importance of using this approach for the success of immigrant youth (Neri et al., 2019; Simpkins et al., 2017).

Theoretical Influences and Research Question

This study is guided by theoretical frameworks that highlight the importance of relationships for supporting youth development. From a positive youth development perspective (Lerner et al., 2011), mentoring relationships are viewed as an ecological, developmental asset, and the mutual interactions between youth and their mentors serve as a protective factor in the healthy development of youth. In a large longitudinal study of new immigrants from diverse sending countries, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) found that “relational engagement,” described as quality relationships with peers, coaches, teachers, and administrators in school settings, served as a protective factor for immigrant youth and positively predicted academic engagement. Out-of-school programs such as Cooperative Extension’s (Extension) 4-H Youth Development Program (4-H), specifically the 4-H Teenagers as Teachers (4-H TAT) model, has been used as a strategy

to promote positive youth development and engage immigrant and diverse youth in 4-H in a variety of contexts (Bird & Subramaniam, 2011; Bolshakova, et al., 2018.; Ripberger & Blalock, 2013; Smith & Enfield, 2002). In the teenagers as teachers model, adolescents learn to teach younger children by first learning child development, group management, public speaking, evaluating their own teaching skills, and learning the subject they will be teaching (Emil et al., 2007; Lee & Murdock, 2001). This model has contributed to positive youth development outcomes for diverse youth (Worker et al., 2018); increased youth's performance in school and sense of responsibility (Hammond-Diedrich & Walsh, 2006); and improved organizational skills, abilities to work with children, and public speaking (Bird & Subramaniam, 2011).

In 4-H TAT programs, adolescents have access to a trusted adult, teacher, community member, or older person who trains and mentors youth, supports the mentees' development, and serves as a natural mentor. Natural mentors provide "ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the young person" (Thompson et al., 2016, p. 48). A qualitative study by Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) describes mentors who provide emotional support and function as "institutional agents" to Mexican high-school-aged youth. These mentors transmitted institutional information and resources about educational institutions and helped youth navigate these systems.

Relationships between mentors and immigrant youth emphasize the importance of understanding the concepts of culture and cultural competence. Culture is "the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people" (Bennett, 1998, p. 3). Cultural competence, also known as intercultural competence, is a "set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, 2008, p. 97). Quality mentoring relationships with immigrant youth are characterized by adults who are culturally competent, non-judgmental, empathetic, and focus on relationship building (Chau et al., n.d.; MENTOR, 2009; Sanchez et al., 2014). Most studies found that matching mentors who share ethnic, racial, and cultural characteristics with youth is important to youth (Sanchez et al., 2014). However, in situations where mixed race or ethnicity matching takes place, Jucovy (2002) suggests mentors should have similarities with mentees and should receive intercultural competency training.

Cultural competence is associated with culturally responsive teaching, an approach that emphasizes "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of cultural reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Gay adds "seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students" (Ibid). For youth development programs, we extend this concept to teaching and mentoring immigrant youth (Sanchez et al., 2014).

Previous research on promising practices of teenagers as teachers programs with diverse youth describes 10 essential elements for successful programs (Lee & Murdock, 2001). These elements include active teen recruitment, team building, initial and ongoing training, detailed curricula, communication and support plans, recognition, evaluation, and the support of dedicated adults. There is limited research on mentoring immigrant youth (Birman & Morland, 2014), and to the best of our knowledge, there is no empirical research on practices to train and mentor immigrant youth to serve as 4-H teenage teachers. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature and aims to explore practices for engaging immigrant youth. The research question is: What are the promising practices for training and mentoring immigrant youth to serve as teen teachers?

Method

This qualitative study was conducted in 2021 and draws upon open-ended interviews with 11 4-H youth-serving professionals. The first author of this manuscript is an immigrant from Peru and is engaged in applied research and program development with immigrant youth. The second author is a second-generation immigrant from Mexico, and her programs serve first and second-generation immigrant youth.

Participants

We used purposive sampling and relied on the 4-H Program Leaders Working Group, Access, Equity and Belonging Committee for recommendations of 4-H professionals who engaged immigrant adolescents in teenagers as teachers programs. Maxwell (1997) defines purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 87). Selection criteria included 1) the 4-H professional directed or facilitated a teenagers as teachers program that had been in operation for more than one year, 2) the program engaged immigrant youth as teen teachers, 3) the program sustained the majority of young people’s participation over time, and 4) had a positive reputation for supporting healthy youth development within their state.

Our study included 11 4-H professionals from three states which corresponds to three regions in the United States: West, Midwest, and Northeast. To ensure confidentiality of the study’s participants, we did not include what state each interviewee works in, nor did we share detailed descriptions of 4-H TAT programs since few individuals in these states work with immigrant youth and families.

In all localities, programs were implemented in an urban U.S. city that serves newcomer and second-generation immigrant youth in partnership with local organizations. The localities in the West are cities that range from 178,000 to 525,000 in population. Immigrant youth are primarily from Mexico and Central American countries. 4-H TAT programs were implemented in partnerships with schools or with organizations that serve immigrant youth year-round. Three

4-H professionals who mentored teens are immigrants or second-generation immigrants from Mexico, and the other two self-identified as White. The localities in the Midwest are cities that range from 117,000 to 828,000 people. Immigrant youth are primarily from Mexico, India, China, Burma, and the Philippines. 4-H TAT programs were implemented in partnership with colleges and immigrant youth-serving organizations during the summer months. The 4-H professional is from Puerto Rico. The localities in the Northeast are cities that range from 32,000 to 66,000 people. Immigrant youth are primarily refugees from African countries, Canada, the Philippines, India, and Korea. 4-H TAT programs were implemented in partnership with immigrant youth-serving organizations during the summer months. Three 4-H professionals self-identified as White. All White professionals had 1-13 years of experience working with vulnerable populations before joining Extension. Participants worked for Extension from 2-15 years. Table 1 includes interviewees' pseudonyms, demographic characteristics, and program duration.

Table 1. Interviewee Gender and Ethnicity

Pseudonym	Region	Gender	Ethnicity/ Generation/Race	Program Scope
Xochitl Dominguez	Midwest	Female	Puerto Rico/1st	Summer
David Morales	West	Male	Bolivian/1st	Year-round
Camila Dorado	West	Female	Mexican/1st	Year-round
Madison Brown	West	Female	White	Year-round
Angela Ramirez	West	Female	Mexican/2nd	School year
Edith Real	West	Female	Mexican/2nd	School year
Sandy Walter	West	Female	White	School year
Karen Owens	Northeast	Female	White	Summer
Sandra Scott	Northeast	Female	White	Summer
Mark Miller	Northeast	Male	White	Summer
Lorie Pierce	Northeast	Female	White	Summer

Data Collection

Data collection included open-ended semi-structured interviews with 4-H professionals via Zoom, and these interviews were recorded. Interviews sought to understand the guiding philosophy of 4-H programs, strategies, and challenges for recruiting, engaging, and sustaining the participation of immigrant adolescents as teen teachers in youth programs. The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. Sample questions are included in Table 2. All interviews were conducted in English, with some use of Spanish. The data were automatically transcribed by Zoom, and researchers cleaned up the transcripts while listening to the audio recording. Team group discussions about the data set were documented in memos for analysis. Data collection protocols were approved by the University of California, Davis Institutional Review Board.

Table 2. Sample Interview Questions

Asked of 4-H Professionals
1. Can you tell me a little about your personal background?
2. What qualities and skills are needed to work with immigrant youth?
3. How would you describe the background of the young people that serve as teen teachers?
4. What strategies do you use to recruit immigrant teens to serve as teen teachers?
5. What strategies do you use to train immigrant teens to serve as teen teachers?
6. What is it about your organization that helps you to support and retain immigrant teens?

Analysis

We analyzed this qualitative dataset (see Table 3 for analysis process) using three coding cycles. We read the interview transcripts and highlighted segments of the text using a priori nodes from immigrant mentoring research. These nodes included mentor’s cultural competency, culturally relevant activities, support English language acquisition, advice and counsel youth, encourage family cohesion, and utilize various forms of communication (Chau et al., n.d.; MENTOR, 2009). We also included the teenagers as teachers essential elements (Lee & Murdock, 2001). In the second coding cycle, we used grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and integrated analysis with respect to conceptual frameworks, organization infrastructure, program elements, and community relationships (Erbstein & Fabionar, 2019). After each coding cycle, the team discussed the data to achieve inter-rater reliability, and decisions were made by consensus (Saldaña, 2009). All coding was done “manually” in the cloud using Box to facilitate access to documents and using multiple color highlights to identify themes. We used Excel to compare and contrast themes among 4-H professionals.

Table 3. Data Analysis Process

Data Analysis Phase	Description
Coding cycle 1: A priori nodes	Broad coding using a priori nodes based on literature review.
Inter-rater reliability	Both team members coded all interviews. Inter-rater reliability was conducted weekly, and differences were resolved via discussion and consensus.
Coding cycle 2: Refined coding	Grounded analysis to refine coding. Reviewed uncoded data to assess the need for additional nodes. Integrated analysis with respect to organizations’ conceptual frameworks, organization infrastructure, program elements, and community relationships.
Analysis phase 1: Potential key practice identification	Identified potential key practices based on the magnitude of nodes (number of interviewees where a practice was featured), as well as prominence of the concept (how much it was described or articulated).
Analysis phase 2: Key practices confirmation	Identified practices pursued by at least two 4-H professionals with similar ethnic backgrounds. Reviewed original transcripts to check findings. Each practice was discussed and agreed upon by the team. Analytical memos were coded and analyzed.

Data Analysis Phase	Description
Coding cycle 3: Key practices	Key practices were entered into an Excel sheet as themes and data were coded to facilitate analysis. Data from immigrant 4-H professionals and data from White/European American 4-H professionals were grouped to compare their similarities and differences.
Analysis phase 3: Key practices	Explored differences in practices by ethnicity/background and perspectives.

We illustrate frequently mentioned ideas or those we felt were particularly innovative or unique. The quotes in this article were selected to represent a general theme in the participants' responses or for their richness and range.

Findings

To train and mentor immigrant youth as adolescent teachers, all 4-H professionals used practices that are consistent with those of mainstream positive youth development (e.g., Gambone & Connell, 2004; Lerner et al., 2011). For example, they cultivate youth's strengths and assets, encourage engagement with staff and program activities, foster a sense of social belonging, and offer a broad system of supports. Staff and youth emphasize team-building activities and youth voice to ensure programs reflect youth interests. All 4-H professionals employed evidence-based strategies for teenagers as teacher programs (Arnold et al., 2016; Lee & Murdock, 2001).

All interviewees negotiated the urban context to engage immigrant youth by establishing and sustaining partnerships with educational, community, or religious organizations. All 4-H professionals described recruiting teens to teach in neighborhoods where programming takes place or within the school or partnering organization to reduce transportation issues. For example, Dominguez shared, "I have several community partners that know the communities I'm serving, and I use them as my scouts to help me identify youth that might be interested in that kind of work." Ramirez conveys how the partnership with a school provided access to a dedicated space for programming but also provided support in recruiting and sustaining the participation of immigrant youth in the program. Partnerships with community-based organizations facilitate building rapport with the immigrant community.

Of interest are the variations in mentoring practices among 4-H professionals that were specifically aimed at immigrant teenagers. Our data revealed three themes that are consistent with the immigrant mentoring literature: cultural competence, culturally responsive mentoring, and parent or family involvement (Oberoi, 2016; Sanchez et al., 2014). This study offers nuanced descriptions of these practices in 4-H teens as teachers programs.

Cultural Competence

Our analysis reveals varying perspectives on what counts as cultural competence. Some 4-H professionals described the importance of acquiring basic knowledge of the history and background of teen teachers and their families. For example, De Villalobos shared,

Having knowledge in terms of the community and the immigrants' experiences, because if we recognize these groups as immigrants, they don't all have the same social conditions or the same experiences. For that reason, it is very important to identify ways to learn and recognize those differences.

4-H professionals described personality traits that are important for relational engagement (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009) with immigrant populations, such as compassion, empathy, respect, active listening, trustworthiness, and willingness to work with immigrant youth. 4-H professionals included a willingness and commitment to engage with immigrant youth as a description of cultural competence. Olson stated, "The willingness to work with the population, to learn about the population and help address those preconceived notions and that institutional racism that exists in our communities, and naming that." Brown conveyed that

Cultural humility is something that I think is really important as you move forward ... and to recognize that you are going to make mistakes. ... I think probably the skill that is most needed is just the willingness and the desire to want to work with people who maybe you wouldn't typically work with.

For a subgroup of 4-H professionals who did not share a similar ethnicity with immigrant youth in their programs, cultural competence included partnering with cultural brokers to facilitate communication and mentoring. Cultural brokering is the act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of different cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change (Jezewski, 1990). Interviewees described cultural brokers as individuals who are bilingual/bicultural or multilingual/multicultural and are either immigrants or are immersed in the community. For most 4-H professionals, cultural brokers were adults or trusted leaders of another youth-serving organization with an established cultural partnership with the immigrant community. An essential function of cultural brokers is augmenting and enhancing communication with youth. Dominguez shared,

I had not been serving only immigrants that come from my same ethnicity and that means that it can be a different language. For example, I had been working with immigrant youth and refugee youth from Burma. They have different dialects, which means that Spanish is not something we have in common. But, recognizing I don't have those skills, I rely on people that do have that and help with the communication piece.

Walter described the role of a cultural broker as someone who facilitates relationships with parents. Cultural brokers, as trusted adults, were also mentors to teenagers in 4-H TAT. Walter shared,

If you have mentors that are part of the community where you're teaching, it helps the kids and the parents to have a greater trust of what's going on. Because she knows things about families that I have no idea. If the kid doesn't show up to teach when he is supposed to be there, I don't know what's going on. But she always knew the little details that I wouldn't know.

Trust is a key component of positive youth development, and cultural brokers are described as serving a fundamental role in facilitating cultural bridge-building between 4-H professionals and the immigrant community.

Culturally Responsive Mentoring

Our analysis offers varying perspectives on the nature and function of mentoring relationships between professionals and immigrant teens. We include subthemes on instructional techniques, mentor roles, and fostering youth's cultural assets (Benson et al., 1998; Moll et al., 1992).

Instructional Techniques

4-H professionals described culturally responsive teaching and mentoring in divergent ways. Most 4-H professionals expressed the significance of repeated teaching practice as a strategy for teens' language acquisition and increased confidence to teach. Several 4-H professionals provide youth scripts or other methods of instruction. Ramirez developed presentations for and with teens, and teens practiced teaching. In the process, they also practiced "anticipating any issues or problems that might come up. Like what happens if you run out of time, what happens if you are not prepared, and the technology is not working." 4-H professionals described these as effective strategies to increase the teens' comfort with English and teaching.

During summer 4-H TAT programs, professionals responded to teens' sporadic participation in the program by adhering to the program's schedule. Pierce described conversations she had with youth: "If I have a relationship with them, I could say, 'Okay, you were not here on Tuesday, what happened? What's up?'" She connected with youth to identify youth's challenges to participation, and she shared that often she could not change the schedule when this was the issue. Similarly, Owens shared she trusted youth to arrive at the program on time. She added,

We started at 5:30, and we ended at 7:30 [p.m.]. In the communities that I work with time is not a thing, so I used to have kids that would come in at like seven. But we're going to end at 7:30 p.m., and I say to them, "I'm so glad you're here, but we're still going to end at 7:30 because I have a place I have to go next."

In 4-H TAT programs that went beyond summer months in scope, professionals expressed the need to have an understanding and compassionate outlook when discussing accountability with immigrant teens. Ramirez responded to youth's off-and-on participation in the program with empathy and flexibility. She stated,

The different socio-economic status and those different responsibilities that come from being in a family of immigrants or from a lower socio-economic scale had a heavy impact on their participation in the program. Being flexible, compassionate, and understanding really comes into play and is really important.

Dorado is aware that teen teachers who do not show up to the program may be experiencing adversity and stated, "I think that when immigrant teenagers are not showing up, how can we support them, so they do show up." Dorado's response to better support youth included recruiting 12 teens when the program only needed two teen teachers. By recruiting more teens, youth rotated, took turns, and taught younger children when their competing family or job demands allowed them time to teach.

Mentor-Mentee Relationships

Our analysis reveals divergent perspectives on the mentor-mentee relationship. Some professionals perceived themselves as role models, partners in a youth-adult partnership, and program facilitators. In these roles, professionals engaged in mentorship within the boundaries of the program. In addition to these roles, other professionals engaged with teens in "long-standing relationships" that went beyond the 4-H TAT program.

Owens shared she invested time in getting to know teens by inquiring about youth's interest in food and music and sharing her own interests with them. By getting to know teen teachers, Owens maintained relationships with teens that went beyond the program setting and interacted with youth in the community and as young adults in college. Dorado described her role as going beyond job responsibilities to include driving teens around, taking a 2 a.m. call from a teenager that is crying, helping them navigate college transcripts, or writing a resume. She added, "A lot of these things have less to do with job responsibilities and more to do with a commitment to help immigrant youth." Several professionals described driving youth to places even though their organizational policies did not allow this. Domingues shared, "We don't have official vehicles. I have to admit that I break the rules, and when youth need it, I do it."

Some professionals also served as counselors in response to youth's needs for well-being. Ramirez described having conversations with youth about what is home to them: "having to deal with all those emotions of missing home. We had a lot of conversations about being homesick and missing the city that they grew up in and missing their family." By listening to youth, Ramirez gained insight into teens' backgrounds and challenges and was able to understand better

and support youth. Real included conversations on mental health with immigrant teenagers as part of the program in response to youth's expressed needs. She stated, "Some of them [youth] opened up and said, 'I suffered with depression, and I've gone through this, and I've been bullied.'" Real described providing guidance, support, and space to foster youth's interests and passions. Oatman acted as an institutional agent (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003) and connected immigrant and refugee youth with organizations that help youth and families with trauma-informed care. Culturally responsive teaching and mentoring include responding to the need for mental health and well-being with immigrant youth.

Cultural Assets

4-H professionals described integrating youth voice in programming to facilitate additional culturally relevant leadership or learning opportunities for and with immigrant youth. These activities provided youth with opportunities to foster their cultural pride and contribute to social justice. Dorado described the development of a teenager as a teacher's soccer program, which flourished due to youth interest and experience, even though there was no curriculum or guide to follow. She also engaged youth in community service activities and organized a retreat to watch a movie. Owens extended the summer program and described offering activities in response to youth's interest, such as learning about community justice, food systems, and nutrition.

One 4-H professional engaged youth in dialogue during training sessions. Domingues shared,

We have different sessions that we offer on how to manage difficult conversations, like cultural awareness. ... To help develop appreciation for their own culture, to feel proud about it. We talk about diversity and what equity means in terms of teens teachers and the work they are doing to make programs accessible to all youth in their county.

The absence of additional perspectives on this component of culturally relevant mentoring illustrates the challenges professionals have to implement culturally responsive strategies in 4-H TAT programs.

Involving Parents

Most professionals stated they involved parents at the beginning of the program to describe the opportunity, complete enrollment forms, or obtain permissions for travel. Two professionals described expanding their mentoring practices to parents of immigrant youth.

We extend the concept of familismo, a dimension of Latinx culture, defined as including the immediate or extended family as part of the nuclear family, to familismo mentorship. This approach embraces the youth and family or extended family into a mentoring relationship. For example, two bilingual 4-H professionals used familismo mentorship with Latinx immigrant youth. Dorado shared an experience where she advised youth and supported parents in their

parenting roles. She stated, “Parents told me, ‘Can you talk to Danny about him going to college, or picking his career?’” In this example, Dorado was trusted to resolve a family concern. Furthermore, Dorado expressed how talking to parents about matters that concerned them was a need that could not be left unattended in the program: “it’s keeping the conversation going with families, which I think it’s a critical accommodation for teens to be in the program.” Similarly, Real shared, “Many times, I’m not only mentoring the youth, but also the parents.” Real responds to parents who seek advice with their children’s schooling, virtual parent-teacher conferences, and career or college opportunities. These 4-H professionals embraced a collective mentorship approach in response to the need for guidance from immigrant youth and parents.

Discussion

Our conversations with 11 4-H professionals increased our understanding of the realities and challenges of integrating culturally responsive teaching and mentoring into 4-H TAT programs with immigrant teen teachers. However, before discussing the results, it is important to acknowledge the limitations that defined our study. First, our focus was on 4-H professionals who engaged immigrant adolescents in 4-H TAT programs from three U.S. regions. Thus, perspectives discussed here may not reflect those of 4-H professionals from other regions of the United States. We focused our study at the program level and did not explore how the organization supports or hinders professionals’ youth development practice. In addition, by focusing solely on purposive sampling, we did not capture the perspectives of professionals who are not known to be engaging immigrant youth to serve as teen teachers. Our original research plan included youth focus group interviews, but due to the pandemic and the resulting digital opportunity gap, we were unable to engage in conversations with youth. All interviewees implemented programs in urban settings, and the perspectives of professionals from suburban and rural settings are not included. This is an important area for further exploration.

The experiences and stories of 4-H professionals remind us that cultural competence, a dynamic and long-lasting endeavor, is co-created with immigrant teens within programs and communities. 4-H professionals engaged in mutual learning with youth, cultural brokers, and communities to develop their cultural competence. This included gaining knowledge and applying skills in teaching and mentoring. Professionals described personality traits that are important for relational engagement (Suárez-Orozco, 2009). These traits included compassion, empathy, respect, active listening, trustworthiness, and willingness to work with immigrant youth. Diaz et al. (2021) identified these personality traits and others as essential for intercultural competence.

We found a nuanced difference in mentoring approaches between 4-H professionals who shared a similar lived experience with youth (immigrant or second-generation) and non-immigrant professionals. Immigrant professionals’ roles extended beyond their job responsibilities to support youth. These professionals assisted immigrant youth and families to navigate adversity

and foster well-being. Moreover, immigrant professionals strengthened immigrant youth's cultural assets and co-created spaces for leadership, dialogue, and activities that matter to them.

We were surprised by what we interpret to be a tension between program length and an assimilationist perspective to the norms of established programs. In summer programs, most professionals emphasized youth's assimilation to program schedule and timeliness. Professionals engaged youth in conversations to deepen the relationship, yet only one professional described long-lasting relationships. 4-H professionals who engaged youth beyond the summer months invested time in adapting the program to meet youth's schedules, engaged youth in conversations of their immigrant experience, supported teens' mental health and well-being, integrated and fostered youth's cultural assets into programming, and developed long-lasting relationships. Longer relationships between mentors and mentees in dyadic relationships are associated with positive youth development outcomes (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). However, Birman and Morland (2014) state there are no empirical studies on whether and how mentoring is related to the acculturation process of youth from immigrant families. Our study indicates this is an area for future research.

Our study supports the need to engage 4-H culturally competent professionals to mentor immigrant adolescents in teenagers as teachers' models. Consistent with empirical research on mentoring immigrant youth, in an ideal situation, 4-H professionals will have a shared living experience with immigrant youth (Birman & Morland, 2014). Our study suggests that when this is not feasible, 4-H professionals who have previous experience working with vulnerable populations will engage cultural brokers to facilitate cultural bridge-building.

Program Recommendations

Immigrant youth make up 17.8 million children of the U.S. youth population (Batalova et al., 2021), yet this study only identified 11 4-H professionals in the nation who engaged immigrant youth in the 4-H TAT model. This indicates that immigrant adolescents are not fully included in this 4-H program model. We suggest the following recommendations for Extension 4-H professionals to operationalize in ways that reflect local interests, needs, and resources to support immigrant youth to engage as teen teachers:

- Build an organizational culture that normalizes cultural responsiveness and affirms and builds on immigrant youth and families' cultural and social capital.
- Cultivate relationships between 4-H professionals and cultural brokers to facilitate greater cultural understanding and to inform program design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Engage in professional development to map local resources and integrate trauma-informed care to address adolescents' social and emotional learning. (Erbstein & Fabionar, 2019; Marshall et al., 2016).

- Create learning environments that promote cultural belonging by including relevant material for youth, facilitate English language acquisition, respect and value immigrant youths' economic responsibilities, and honor youth and familial heritage.
- Build trust with parents and caregivers to facilitate familismo or collective mentoring.

Research Recommendations

This exploratory study describes culturally relevant teaching and mentoring strategies in 4-H TAT programs. Future research could utilize Simpkins et al. (2017) culturally relevant framework for out-of-school programs to operationalize these practices within the context of immigrant youth-serving organizations. Secondly, investigating the role of mentoring in acculturation would benefit programs and immigrant youth and families. Thirdly, similar to the work of Bruce and Bridgeland (2014), which describes youths' perspectives on outcomes and availability of mentoring programs, there is a need to include immigrant adolescents' perspectives on effective teenagers as teachers models. Finally, it is important to understand whether and how the locality in which adolescents teach influences practitioners and youths practice. Research in these areas will offer important insights for program development, facilitate the inclusion of immigrant youth's contributions to these program models, and foster the well-being of immigrant and refugee youth.

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