Book Chapter

"Who'll even listen to me"? The Cognitive-Emotional Spiral Effect of Integrating Volunteer Youth into Emergency Teams

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Public interest statement - The research findings are especially important for community managers and youth counselors who engage in non-formal education. The study enables holistic observation of the consequences of incorporating youth in the CET program in a small and isolated communal settlement. The findings show that the program has improved the community's emergency plan, strengthened communal empowerment in the settlement, and strengthened the self-efficacy and self-esteem of the participating youth.

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Abstract

Examining the implications of recruiting youth for local community emergency team (CET) in a small rural settlement near Israel's eastern border, is at the center of this chapter. Three different perspectives were examined: The contribution to professional operations of the emergency team, to community social capital and to youth empowerment. The article is based on a study which included participant observation and in-depth interviews with youth CET members and their parents, and with adult CET organizers and members. Findings show that the program improved the community's emergency response preparations, empowered the community, and strengthened self-efficacy and self-esteem of the participating youth. The emotional aspect was found to be a central factor in setting change processes in motion, both in the functionality of CET youth and their relationships with adults. Evidently, by being incorporated into the program, adolescents experienced emotional empowerment which affected them personally,

deepening their understanding and attitudes towards the collective.

Keywords

Community Emergency Team; Youth Volunteering; Youth Organizing; Communal Empowerment; Self–Efficacy; Youth Civic Engagement

Introduction

On a mundane day in the summer of 2009 a child from Barak – a small peripheral settlement in Israel, went missing. Local adolescents were called to participate in a think tank and search team. This formative event revealed much about the power and willingness of the youth of the community to aid in emergencies.

Secluded rural settlements must deal with their remoteness from public response centers, since the size of such settlements does not justify the maintenance of basic services, such as health services, fire and rescue services, and police forces. The absence of such services is especially acute during emergencies and disasters that often strike swiftly and without warning. Therefore, these remote communities must prepare in advance and arrange an accessible and skilled team that is on continuous stand-by and comes into operation during such hours of need. The community's functionality during the crisis span greatly depends upon its ability to organize and on its preparedness to manage an emergency. The community emergency team (CET), comprised of volunteer residents of the same community who are trained to face emergencies in their place of residence, came to address this need. In the past few decades' emergency teams have been established in Israel, mainly in the periphery and in settlements near national borders. Barak is an example of one such secluded settlement in which a community emergency team was founded. The team comprises adult residents, most of them with families, who volunteered to contribute their skills and time to this team.

Another difficulty which characterizes small rural settlements is the low supply of extracurricular activities available to teenagers and the lack of after-school challenges for them. Small settlements find difficulty in supplying the needs of settlement youth, especially when it comes to those youth perceived by peers as socially unacceptable at school, which may lead to frustration, boredom, and even vandalism [1].

Following the emergency event of summer 2009, a decision was made in Barak in 2010 to start a youth community emergency team (YCET). The project was initiated in collaboration with the regional council, the Department of Social Services, and the Community Work Unit, as a primary attempt to incorporate teenagers into community emergency response preparations and add them to the adult emergency team.

Twenty-five candidates requested to join the program. The selection was based on criteria of maturity, responsibility, and skill sets that could contribute to the group, including knowledge of technology, languages, familiarity with the environment, the ability to navigate, and good manual dexterity. Twelve adolescents, aged 14-17, were chosen. Success in studies and social status at school were not criteria; students spanning the full gamut of academic achievement from gifted students to relatively weak students were included. and some of the candidates were considered socially unacceptable at school. A professional training program was prepared to train the selected youth for this role, including a four months program of three-hour, bi-weekly training sessions.

Since 2010, the YCET program has become highly popular in distant and peripheral settlements in Israel. However, no holistic perspective of this program's effects has been presented and no evaluation research has been conducted. This research is the first to examine interpersonal and emotional relationships between people involved in the program, their influence on the CET organization, its young members and the community.

Community Involvement of Youth

A sense of community (SoC) and community involvement mean active engagement "in issues that affect people's lives and impact the larger community" [2]. Adolescence is identified by the formation of personal and collective identity, while cultural and social context has a central role in developing a coherent self-identity [3,4]. Researchers emphasize the importance of psychological involvement in the positive development of youth [5], in the empowerment and positive strengthening of their self-perception and in fostering their learning motivation [6,7]. Youth participation in community events has cognitive-emotional repercussions, manifesting in the lives of the adolescents themselves. Those who are involved in their local communities create stronger bonds with other community members, stronger determination to solve problems, and a stronger sense of social responsibility [8,9]. Active communal participation has been found to be an important tool for promoting the development of critical awareness, political involvement, empowerment, and good citizenship of youth [10,11],

Youth-adult relationships based on mutual trust and respect may be powerful promoters of organizational, community, and social change, strengthen adolescents' sense of security, resilience, and critical thinking, and advance their social well-being [12-15]. Researchers highlight core components coming into play to create an effective youth-adult partnership: Unjudgmental and egalitarian support by adults who act as natural youth "mentors"; reciprocal activity and joint decision making. These components enable youth and adults to form engagements through meetings with community stakeholders and to work together towards a common goal [16-19].

Youth Volunteering in the Community

Volunteering - "a helping action of an individual that is valued by him or her, and yet is not aimed directly at material gain, or mandated or coerced by others" [20] - might be motivated by altruistic motives to help others, self-interest, or by the combination of egoistic and self-interest motives [21,22].

According the role identity model, engagement in volunteering work enhances commitment to the organization, which in turn increases involvement in its activities and leads to a change in the volunteer's role identity and self-concept [23,24].

Adolescence is identified by the formation of personal and collective identity, while cultural and social context have a central role in developing a coherent self-identity [3,4].

Research has shown that younger people tend to be motivated to take part in volunteer work by the opportunity to enhance social networking and skills and value their contribution to a specific cause [25]. Volunteerism gives young people the opportunity to appraise their own competencies and thus to further construct their personal and collective identity [3]. Voluntary service of young people supports their cognitive, emotional, social and moral development: Studies have shown positive effects on socialization, belonging to the community, political participation [24] and formation of social norms [26]. Crocetti, Erentaitė & Žukauskienė [27] identified a positive correlation between social-cognitive identity styles in adolescence, positive youth development and civic engagement through volunteering. Youth volunteering was found to increase a sense of community, promote pro-social orientations such as altruism, cultivate democratic citizenship and improve volunteers' social well-being [28-30]. Many studies have reported improvements in self-concept, including self-esteem and career identity, as the effects of volunteer activities on adolescents [8,9,28]. Moreover, youth volunteering decreases the probability of negative behaviors such as school absenteeism or drug problems [31,32].

Awareness of the role of adolescents in the community and acknowledging them as an asset and a resource of human capital has contributed to the development of "Youth Community Organizing" (YCO) model. According to YCO participatory approach, young people are placed in leadership positions to lead for positive community change, and become the "organizing core" of community activities, while still receiving support and guidance from accompanying adults [6]. The application of the model is manifested through the incorporation of youth into a

wide range of structured and supervised volunteer activities [33-36]. Preliminary studies on YCO programs show a positive effect on participants' development and indicate that such programs may improve adolescents' abilities to take responsibility, cope and change challenging personal and family situations [34,35]. YCO and other civic and community engagement programs afford adolescents key roles and fields of responsibility, acknowledge their rights, recognize their capabilities as leaders during a crisis and turn youth into a central power source [37-39].

Incorporating Volunteer Youth into Emergency Teams

Because emergencies are usually local, decision makers have become more conscious of the special role adolescents play in emergencies [40]. Therefore, according to "participatory disaster risk prevention" approach, it is crucial to involve community's adolescents alongside its adults in preparing for and preventing disasters. This approach encourages the inclusion of all community members in emergency management and planning, consulting, and decision-making on all disaster-related aspects, regardless of ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, gender and age [41-44].

Various programs have been developed to incorporate youth into the field of emergency action in many countries around the world, including Canada, India, and the US [45,46]. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), US Department of Education, and the Red Cross have developed a strategy for recruiting and training communities to educate children and adolescents in the fields of emergency management and preparedness. The Community Emergency Response Team youth program [47] is an established and recognized example. These educational programs address three stages of an emergency: Preparation prior to the emergency; reaction during the emergency; recovery in its wake.

Youth strengthen the operational aspect of emergency response preparations in ways that adults do not. They contribute energy, enthusiasm, knowledge, geographical familiarity, innovative

ideas, creativity, and easy access to learning-enabling communication technology. Adolescents tend to perceive the situation in a different way than adults, placing emphasis on issues that an adult might overlook [48]. They may show greater courage, resourcefulness and a great deal of independence and leadership skills, and sometimes might even be more practical [13,49-52]. Despite the growing awareness in recent years of the significance of youth as human capital in management of emergencies, the local applications of these programs remain limited [41,42,53].

Incorporation of volunteering youth in emergency teams contributes to their sense of collective responsibility and reinforces their social involvement. It develops adolescents' emotional connections with the community and family and affords them mental security and resilience [13,54], develops their leadership skills [52] and may shape their future position in society [51].

The literature on volunteer youth in the community and their incorporation into emergency teams has focused primarily on presenting the various benefits of dichotomous sequence between the individual and the collective levels. These depictions disregard the mutual effects and their important contribution to increasing motivation to volunteer and to personal youth empowerment. This chapter examines the implications of recruiting youth and incorporating them into a local community emergency team and attempts to present a holistic picture of the relationship between youth and community.

The Current Study

This study aims to unravel the inner cognitive-emotional processes that motivate adolescents and adults as they volunteer, and the effects of these processes on the program's level of success. It seeks to understand the overall effect of the experimental program on incorporating adolescent volunteers into the CET team of the community settlement. The research focuses on three central questions: What was youth contribution

to the management of the emergency operational response preparations? How did the incorporation of youth in the community emergency team affect the fabric of youth-adult-community relations? What were the consequences of participation in this program on personal youth empowerment, and on their connection to the settlement in which they reside? The case study presents a holistic picture of an ongoing cognitive-emotional spiral of youth-community relationships based on research of the emotional overflow, understandings and insights that have arisen following the YCET project.

Methods
Participants

The study was conducted in Barak, a small community settlement of 450 families and 1800 residents, near the eastern border of Israel. All participants were graduates of 2013 YCET course that took place in the settlement.

Eighteen in-depth interviews were held between October and December of 2014: four interviews with adult CET members (boys); 10 interviews with participants in the YCET course, (3 girls and 5 boys, (66% of the participants)); and four interviews with participants' parents (3 women, 1 man). The ages of the young boys and girls were 14 to 17, and the ages of the adults were 38 to 55. 72% of the interviewees were secular, 28% traditional; 73% born in Israel, and 27% in the CIS.

Procedure

In the first step, two in-depth interviews were conducted to reveal the aims of the program and th technical details related to the procedure for screening and accepting candidates. The first interview was with the head of the YCET course, Noga Friedman, who planned the program, and the second with the CEO of Barak settlement. They were asked to describe impressions from the program, define the successes or failures, and focus on unexpected events that occurred during the program. The descriptions included experiences from their point of view and from the perspective of different individuals who

were related to the program. Documents related to the YCET course were also displayed. The testimonies helped to define three main topics that became the focus of the second step of the research.

In the second step participants were asked to address the following questions in detail: "In your opinion, did the youth contribute to the professional operation of the CET organization?", "How would you describe the YCET relationship with the community?" and "What was the impact of the YCET program on the youth?"

The study involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews, during which original questions were dynamically changed in accordance with topics raised by the interviewee. The interviewees were chosen randomly. Interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face, except of one interview that was conducted over the phone. Prior to conducting the interviews, approval by the University Ethics Committee was obtained as well as parental consent for adolescents. The interviewees were asked to address their own personal experiences, attitudes and feelings relating to the YCET volunteer program. Interviews took place in the interviewer's home or at the CET office and lasted between one to two hours. All interviews transcriptions were analysed, followed by categorization of the elicited information. Each category signifying a salient issue raised in several of the interviews; no contradictions or disputes were found between the portrayals given by adolescents, parents, or adult CET members. However, there were differences in emphasis between them, some of which complemented each other and provided a broad picture of the program's implications.

Results
'It turned out that I was the first to arrive': Professional and Operational Improvements

Availability and Mobility: Youth proved to be more available than adults during emergencies, as they spend most of their days and nights in the settlement. Youth have an advantage over many of the adults because they can move quickly from place to place.

This mobility is important during emergencies – an advantage that had not been thought of before. Team members often had to run between various locations within the settlement. Additionally, some areas in the settlement are more familiar to adolescents than to adults. As the head of CET logistics described:

In our drill, we simulated the destruction of the youth movement club, a place that was entirely unknown to me, personally. I used adolescents to locate the entrances, the fuse boxes, and the possible exits accessible on foot. They did a good job; the drill changed my perception of them.

One of the boys described:

I was very excited during the drill, […] When it began, I was running as fast as I could. It turned out that I was the first to arrive at the field to provide status reports. I knew the place better than the adults […] It was a great feeling […] I understood we really can help!

The inter-generational encounter presented both adults and adolescents with a mirror image, and each group became more aware of the other group's advantages while discovering its own capacities and limitations. Adults learned to appreciate the young volunteers while exposed to their own limitations, and they showed willingness to count on them in real-time situations. Youth learned to appreciate adults' experience, and their accumulative experience was mainly one of personal success: by virtue of being chosen for the job, of their own success in performing it, and of the positive feedback adults gave them. The youth enjoyed adults' growing trust, and as their self-esteem developed, so did their self-confidence and desire to prove themselves in other aspects of settlement life.

Fresh and Creative Thinking: The main contribution of the youth to the CET, according to interviews with adults and adolescents, was their advantage as out-of-the-box thinkers. In the words of the head of logistics: "As smart as we think we are, sometimes a child's way of thinking can change the course of

things." The interviewees were like-minded in thinking that youth contribute greatly to brainstorming and excel in improvising solutions differently than do adults. During a brainstorming session seeking methods to get residents to update needed details, the adolescents came up with ideas such as opening a booth near the settlement's pool, changing the form's wording to make filling it out simpler and more convenient, and adolescents going door-to-door to help residents fill out the form.

One teenager described the contribution of youth to the joint thought process as follows: "Young people are more innovative, they can come up with brilliant ideas, they're exposed to so many things and they sometimes know a lot more". Working alongside adolescents has revealed that their lack of experience in managing emergencies is an advantage, rather than a disadvantage. Nothing was obvious because of their involvement.

High Levels of Technology Proficiency: Work with the youth included mainly emergency preparation during routine days and drills, because there are just a few emergencies in Barak. The adolescents built an internet infrastructure with lists of residents' personal details and vital information on special needs populations and uploaded the information to the "cloud", where everyone could access it, so that during emergencies the required data would be available from anywhere with "cloud" access. As the CET vice-chairman describes:

We used whomever specialized in any field: We turned a Russian-speaking girl into a translator. A logistics team created an updated resident database. To do that, the head of the team was aided by two teenage girls who fed the data into the computer.

Other adult CET members noted that incorporating youth has improved CET operation, in both planning and executing activities. Placing faith in youth has proven useful and afforded the emergency team with innovation, technological skills, availability, and mobility.

'Adopting a sense of local patriotism': Strengthening Community Capital

Local Patriotism: The program for incorporating youth into the CET represents an approach that calls to invest in a "select group". The professional collaboration between youth and adults has changed teenagers' attitudes toward the settlement, as evident in many interviews. One girl told us that merely being chosen to volunteer in the CET alongside adults made her feel important and needed, "I didn't treat them as adults, but as part of the team. My attitude was about being together." And another girl added, "I was really moved. I never thought teenagers meant anything here in the settlement." According to the interviewees, these sentiments were expressed every time they encountered adult residents. As one girl explained:

When we went from house to house to update the residents' emergency contact details, … as soon as I said I was YCET, I immediately had a special status … I felt like people took me more seriously.

The adolescents mentioned they feel responsible for the settlement by virtue of their inclusion in the program, and considering how much it had invested in them and the trust it had placed in them. One boy stated:

After the course, I felt like taking part in building the community, being responsible for the community, maintaining order, and improving it. We adopted a sense of local patriotism; I began using language like 'our settlement', 'my settlement'. It's not obvious.

"Work relations" formed between CET youth: The appreciation and praise adolescents receive for their work with CET have strengthened their new status in the settlement and tightened their emotional link to their place of residence, leading them to exhibit more empathy and caring towards the settlement, the community, and their families. As a result, adolescents have sought out new tasks and challenges that would allow them to contribute to the greater good. Adults realized CET adolescents

can be relied on, reinforcing their mutual collaboration and increasing mutual trust. This realization encouraged better communication between adolescents and adults and led to a candid and open relationship they didn't previously have. It also intensified sentiments of a fate shared with the rest of the residents in the settlement and with it a sense of pride in belonging to it.

A Sense of Altruism: Adolescents have mentioned the changes they have undergone in their willingness to contribute to the greater good. Residents have described a sense of pride in the settlement over the fact that youth aren't merely "self-involved", but also give and care for others. The adolescents who volunteered in the CET developed volunteering habits, and some continue to volunteer in other places in and out of school following the program, in a variety of fields. As a girl from the program described, "CET activity set a very positive wheel in motion […] the personal commitment school program required 60 hours of volunteer work, but I did double that—I volunteered with holocaust survivors…"

CET youth have aided with the organization of community events in the settlement. Some have volunteered as instructors in the Betar Youth Movement in the settlement, thus gaining the respect of both adolescents and adults. The adolescents have said that their CET training provided them with the tools to motivate others, and so, when the requirement calls for youth to volunteer around the settlement, they can volunteer themselves, motivate other adolescents, and coordinate the activity. Following rumors of the course and activity around it, parents and adolescents who have yet to join the CET asked to join the program.

The desire around the settlement to volunteer in the CET has risen, and volunteers have become "the settlement's elite youth", as the CET vice chairman says, "People came to me, asking me to put their kid in the CET; the circle of involvement and caring is expanding".

Environmental Commitment and Leadership: The CET training has given values such as taking responsibility of the

environment and coping ecologically with abnormal events in the field. Youth availability and their inclination to spend their time out of their homes have given them an advantage in identifying abnormal events and reacting quickly to evolving scenarios. One such example could be seen in this testimony by the CET chairwoman:

A boy asked the following question during the course, "Who'll even listen to me during an emergency? I'm just a boy." And the CET vice-chairman answered him, "People will listen to whomever reacts to an emergency." One day, that same boy left his house and saw that seven trees in his yard were on fire. His sister and mother, who were in the house, panicked, as did the neighbor. The boy evacuated people from their homes and then called the fire department. By the time they arrived the fire was completely under control. After the event, that boy told me excitedly that what he had learned in the course truly helped him.

After the course, the bond between CET youth and settlement leadership strengthened, and they began cooperating in order to receive information and aid in resolving problems that arose in the community. When a member of the settlement attempted suicide, the youth were asked to block the way to prying eyes. As leaders, CET youth became role models for other teenagers and encouraged them to behave in a positive manner.

Most youth and adult interviewees emphasized the end of vandalism in the settlement, following the CET program. Though CET adolescents themselves were not the perpetrators, their involvement in the project created an atmosphere which discouraged others to commit acts of vandalism. As one boy pointed out, "CET adolescents can calm down non-CET adolescents. They'll listen to me." CET youth have testified that they became more sensitive when it comes to identifying troubled adolescents in the settlement and have become a significant agent to which children and teenagers may turn, directly and without restrictions or worries. As the settlement's community coordinator put it, "CET youth lend an ear where we might not". A girl mentioned identifying the needs of adults who

require help around the settlement, who were aided by adolescents. She, for example, speaks Russian, and thus helped improve the communication between the settlement offices and its Russian-speaking population.

Youth that participated in the CET course became more positive; this change was manifested in their attitudes towards their family and parents; therefore, their parents, other family members, friends and people in their immediate surroundings related better to them.

'It changed me completely': Youth Empowerment through YCET Project

Self-discovery: Adolescents mention how the project enriched their knowledge and provided them a different perspective on a variety of fields that were previously unknown to them but now raised their curiosity. For example, they admitted that before the course they were not aware of the importance of organization and logistics for emergency response preparations, nor did they know that the subject could be studied academically. Others became interested in medicine, following their course training. The experience allowed them to make decisions regarding their chosen course of study, military career and future profession.

The adolescents attributed a great deal of importance to the spokesperson training, in which they practiced public speaking and sending messages during emergencies. Even the shyest members learned how to speak in front of an audience and discovered they were capable of doing that and even enjoy it. Some have further developed these skills as instructors in the youth movement, at school or in their army service.

CET activity allowed youth to discover new skills they were not aware of before joining the YCET. This aspect came up in the following depiction by one of the boys, "[The project] mostly gave a lot of confidence to […] who didn't have much, who didn't stand out or talk as much. This place brought some [teenagers] out of their shells. People became confident, realized they could talk, and that their opinions matter." CET activities

tested, for example, their ability to successfully cope with pressure at work; some adolescents found that they perform even better under such circumstances, others discovered their ability and gift for thinking outside of the box, and some discovered their leadership skills, as manifested through their improved communication abilities, authoritativeness, and other characteristics.

Parents and some youth mentioned more investment in school studies as a result of participation in the YCET program. As one of the girls described: It changed me completely. I was quite a weak student, […] someone who was shy and introverted […] knowing that I was chosen for the program (maybe because I speak Russian) […] it strengthened my self-confidence. After the course, I made new friends. I have taken responsibility for myself and for our surroundings. CET set things and gave me a push.

Strengthening of Social Status: YCET activity has garnered social connections among CET participants. As a boy who participated in the course described, "My best friends are the guys from the CET. Those are the people I am closest to since then, because we shared the experience." The mother of one CET teenager pointed out that his involvement in the YCET had contributed to his ability to fit in socially with other teenagers in the settlement, "He knew he was a very smart but not social person; he used to shut himself at home… The project gave him the ability to overcome this obstacle". Another mother described, "My daughter used to be a very lonely girl; she completely changed that year."

The testimonies of adolescents who participated in the program revealed that they felt calmer and less anxious about emergencies after their CET program training; that their preparedness for an emergency gave them an advantage over other teenagers and strengthened their social status. Over time, the adolescents who took part in the course became a close-knit group and began spending time with each other beyond CET activities. The CET volunteer work created positive peer pressure that encouraged adolescents to become active and put

their minds together to think about what they could do in, and contribute to, the settlement and the community, and so further established their social status in the settlement. Being a part of the emergency team gave all volunteer adolescents an equal opportunity to find and execute their innate potential and discover skills they were not aware of. Volunteering alongside adults, gave them an opportunity to receive significant reinforcements they may not have received from their teenage peers. This is especially significant with respect to talented adolescents with low self-esteem and relatively week social skills. Evidently, success on one level, such as the discovery of personal skills, alongside positive feedback from adults, encourages self-efficacy and may increase adolescents' self-confidence.

Discussion

In a post-modern age that emphasizes individualism, alienation and achievement, community volunteer work is not the obvious choice. Nevertheless, we are witnessing a developing phenomenon of adults and adolescents volunteering for the greater good, in social movements and governmental emergency organizations. The case of Barak enables a holistic observation of the consequences of incorporating youth into CET program in a small, isolated settlement from three perspectives: CET organization, the community and the youth.

The findings show the program improved the emergency teams, both in planning and in practice, empowered the community and strengthened self-efficacy and self-esteem of the young participants. Like a ripple effect, introducing adolescents into emergency teams led to unexpected changes. It turned out that having them work side-by-side with adults blurred the boundaries between the worlds of adults and youth while preserving and redesigning them. Indeed, adolescents contributed to operational improvement of emergency response preparations, but moreover, youth involvement encouraged better communication and promoted new sincerity and openness between generations, strengthening their common sense of shared fate. Professional appreciation, empathy and a new

discourse of understanding, esteem, and mutual respect replaced a discourse rife with rights and duties. At the same time, the incorporation of adolescents into CETs forced adults to set a personal example and take their CET role seriously, while assisting the youth to become aware of their own capabilities and connection to the community.

Apparently, YCET program also had far wider implications that concerned the overall socio-cultural discourse in the settlement. The change in adult-adolescent relationships was not restricted to CET activity alone, but also induced a positive transformation in the familial inter-generational connection, in the attitudes of youth toward the rest of the community, and in CET adolescents' attitude towards their peers in the settlement. Following the recruitment of adolescents into CETs in Barak, an atmosphere of joint responsibilities, including both adults and adolescents, had been developed in the community. Additionally, the self-image of CET youth improved, and their sense of connection to their settlement became stronger. These changes are the result of a process beginning with a structured initiative that led to spontaneous chain reactions which strengthened mutual connections and relations between residents.

Preparation for emergencies calls for experience with crises – for which CETs must practice and be on call, knowing they may be called to an emergency at any moment. In addition, any emergency in the settlement is a catalyst that floods the shared emotions and experiences that become embedded in the community over time until the next event. Therefore, ongoing CET activities create constant tension and excitement, as the connection to the settlement and its community develops not only during active hours, but throughout the day. Participation in CETs evokes feelings of collective responsibility in adolescents toward their environment and a "continuous sense of community" [2].

The emotional aspect was found to be a central factor in setting change processes in motion, both in the functionality of CET youth and their relationships with adults in the settlement. Adolescents experienced emotional empowerment which

affected them personally by being incorporated into the program and strengthened their understanding and attitudes towards the collective. The study reveals the importance of encouraging youth to achieve "little successes" which strengthen their self-efficacy and self-esteem. Moreover, the positive feedback and emotional support adolescents received from adults during their joint activity in the emergency team and the community was also important. The positive reinforcements received from the small and large successes, from the adult participants' feedback and the responses of the surrounding community, elicited strong feelings among youth and adults, which in turn led to insights that changed their mutual perceptions, and contributed to the adolescents' cognitive-emotional development of identity.

The encouragement which did not come from within the formal educational frameworks but rather spontaneously from members of the community, has had a profound effect on the adolescents. These have all been motivating factors that transformed the settlement's communal social capital and empowered the adolescents themselves. Studies have indicated that volunteer work in governmental emergency organizations and youth movements may evoke feelings of altruism, resourcefulness and leadership. An important finding to be emphasized is that when volunteers participate in the emergency response preparations of their own communities, the experience strengthens additional emotions. Emergency preparations concern the basis of consciousness regarding adolescents' overall sense of affiliation, and consequently, feelings of empathy toward the people they live with, a sense of community, and strong sentiments toward their place of residence.

The study reveals several positive effects created following the incorporation of adolescents into YCET program and shows that youth who joined the program not only volunteered in emergencies, but also became active in the settlement and developed stronger connection to the community. The study presents youth empowerment process of three dimensions: increasing the efficiency of the community emergency response preparations; empowering the community; and empowering CET adolescents themselves. These dimensions could be described as

a comprehensive system whose parts interact with each other, empowering each other cognitively and emotionally.

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