

DISSERTATION

THE PHENOMENA DRIVING YOUTH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES
IN NORTHEASTERN COLORADO

Submitted by
Cindy Cindrich
School of Education

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Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: Karen Kaminski
Co-Advisor: Tobin Lopes

William Timpson
Malcolm Scott

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the study was to describe the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives across 10 counties in northeastern Colorado by interpreting open-ended surveys from community residents and researcher observations. The design of the study used thematic analysis framed with Social Exchange Theory (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015; Smith et al., 2014) to describe the stakeholders involved in youth professional development programming and explore how power and trust support or impede region wide initiatives. The findings from nine open-ended surveys combined with communications and researcher's observations suggest that trust is built between individuals across the region but slowly dissolves at the organizational level creating what was described by a participant as the, "we tried and failed syndrome out here" across the region. Based on the findings, a methodology of appreciative inquiry is recommended to strengthen region wide initiatives by developing trust and balancing power across the communities in northeastern Colorado.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that youth development and community development are interdependent (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Brown & Schafft, 2011). Building the capacity for youth professional development programming in rural communities can engage youth in their community's development while benefiting them, the community, and its employers (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2015). Recent federal legislation requires state level workforce development agencies to build their capacity for youth professional development programming through facilitating community wide initiatives (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act HR 133-803, 2015). Youth professional development initiatives require participation from local businesses across industry sectors along with schools and local agencies to provide youth the opportunity to explore career options via activities such as: college and industry tours, workshops focusing on career readiness, or job shadowing and internships (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2015; National Governors Association; Pintel, 2013).

In northeastern Colorado a scattered web of workforce development professionals work to develop opportunities for youth professional development initiatives across 10 rural counties where the strongest industry sector is crop and animal production and the highest growing occupations from 2014-2015 were maids and housekeeping cleaners (Eastern Economy Overview, 2016). My interest in the professional development opportunities for youth in northeastern Colorado began in March of 2007 when I accepted the position of Job Corps admissions counselor for northern Colorado. Job Corps is a federally funded workforce development program that provides youth ages 16-24 with the basic education and vocational

training required to earn and maintain sustainable employment (Job Corps, 2016). The position required me to travel from the remote rural towns on the northeastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, into the urban and suburban areas along the range's base, and out into the primarily agricultural communities of the northeastern plains. As an admissions counselor I learned about youth's personal and professional goals, assessed their skill level, and directed them to the proper learning environment either within the Corps or in community programming that endeavored to ensure the youth's learning needs were met. In addition I worked to develop relationships with local businesses, agencies, and organizations to gain recruitment sources and to assist the youth in transitioning home after up to two years in the Corps.

Within a year of accepting the position I learned that the youth in northeastern Colorado have few options for career exploration or training, and even fewer advocates working to generate professional development opportunities in the area. I entered these communities as an outsider in a position of support, not as a researcher. I worked with countless professionals, youth, and their families across the region to facilitate connections between the youth and the resources they required to learn. I found myself drawn to a core group of agencies and individuals in the northeast who generate unique ways to engage and inform youth across large geographic areas.

Over time my researcher's instincts and problem solving skills led me to begin to internally organize observations, and my engagement level in the northeast gradually increased. After six years with Job Corps I moved on to another position in a blended statewide high school. Yet I remain steadfast in my commitment to assisting the youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado by providing this work as a source for the

agencies and institutions in the region to use to generate awareness in their local communities and meet state and federal reporting requirements.

How a Pilot Study Informed the Current Study

A pilot study was conducted in Sterling, Colorado during the spring and summer of 2015 to test interview questions and explore methods of recruiting participation in the region (Cindrich & Kaminski, 2015). The purpose of the study was to pilot interview questions that explored the professional development opportunities for young adults (ages 18-24) in Northeastern Colorado by interpreting interviews with young adults, employers, trainers, and workforce development professionals in Sterling, Colorado. Sterling was selected as the pilot location for recruitment because it maintains the highest population compared to other municipalities in the region, which provided the highest probability of recruiting at least one interviewee for all four groups. After three months of recruitment only one interview was conducted with a female workforce development professional.

Generating the preliminary codes and sub-codes displayed in Appendix A provided insights into the complexity of assigning individual roles in youth professional development programming and highlighted limitations in the pilot's design. Issues with lack of trust, time, and resources appeared across all three guiding questions. Face to face interviews in the pilot's design also conflicted with the lack of trust, time, and resources throughout the region which negatively affected the recruitment of interviewees.

The design of the pilot included the conceptualization of four key stakeholder groups involved in youth professional development programming: learners, employers, educators, and workforce development professionals. However when asked to describe her role in youth professional development programming the interviewee dismissed her assigned role as a

workforce development professional and focused on being a mentor to youth in the area. In addition the interviewee pinpointed key roles such as parent, sibling, and law enforcement (probation/parole officer) that are often the guiding force behind youth participating in professional development programming. The limitations from defining stakeholders and assigning roles prior to data collection became clear during analysis and provided insight to alternative ways for self-reporting of roles in future studies. Through the pilot I also learned that in order to gain the community's perception of the professional development opportunities for youth in the region I must work around tight schedules, develop trust, and convey a high level of commitment to assisting the youth in northeastern Colorado.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives across 10 counties in northeastern Colorado by interpreting open-ended surveys from community residents and researcher observations. The following questions were developed to guide the study:

1. What constitutes a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado?
2. Who are the stakeholders involved in youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado?
3. How does power and trust support or impede professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado?

These guiding questions were developed using my experience from 10 years of working with youth and their families across northeastern Colorado and via the lessons learned through pilot studies in the region.

Researcher's Perspective

As a middle-aged, white, female educator who has worked with youth across Colorado for over 10 years, I am aware of how my experience influenced the design of the study. When my doctoral journey began in 2011 my choice of topic seemed clear, using my knowledge and experience I would develop a holistic interpretation of the professional development opportunities for youth in northeastern Colorado. I aimed to do this by conducting a pilot study that allowed me to analyze interviews from key stakeholders in the region. I thought I would be overwhelmed with data once I provided the mode for community members to be heard. But as I reached out to my long term networks and asked for their participation I was confronted with the same lack of time, resources, and trust I dealt with years before when I struggled to locate options for Job Corps graduates in the region. Individuals who would sit at the local coffee house and talk with me for hours suddenly were too busy to be “interviewed.”

Literature in rural community research would attribute my network's lack of engagement to the demanding schedules of agrarian and blue collar communities (Cudney et al., 2004; Gile, 2011; Handcock & Gile, 2011), and many potential interviewees I approached indicated limited time due to work schedule when declining my invitation to participate. Anyone tied to the agricultural and livestock industries in the northeastern plains spends much of their day traveling great distances to tend to crops and animals, while others working in the natural resource industries travel the same roads as the farmers and ranchers to reach the countless drill sites and scattered wind farms that share the land with the crops and animals. Municipal and social service representatives are stretched thin across the region while educators from both secondary and postsecondary institutions work countless hours to balance learner needs with state and federal expectations. While reviewing the literature from rural research was helpful in explaining why I

completed only one interview for the first pilot study, the majority of those I approached for an interview said they felt there were others “more qualified” to speak to the professional development opportunities for the youth in their area.

In my opinion everyone in a community is qualified to speak to the professional development opportunities for youth in their area. The employer and the youth feel the brunt of the outcomes from youth professional development initiatives since the employer needs skilled workers and the youth needs sustainable employment. The parents of the youth are qualified to speak based on their own experience navigating the workforce and their experience with their child’s interests and skills, just as the teacher is qualified to speak using their personal experience and their knowledge of the youth’s goals and academic ability. So why did every high school teacher I approach tell me: “I’m not qualified to talk about youth professional development options around here, you would get better information from..?”

My experience in the region tells me those who felt unqualified to be interviewed also felt powerless to make a difference in the amount or quality of opportunities for youth in the area. But after almost a decade immersed in the region I found myself unable to describe the hesitation and powerless feelings experienced by my prospective interviewees. As an active advocate and mentor for youth in the region I knew if the individual promoting a youth professional development initiative was not trusted, the initiative would never get off the ground. But as a researcher I lacked the data and theoretical support to frame my pilot study and guide my methods to empirically describe the experience. To test the assumption I had to review social theories that address the effects of power and trust at the communal level and provide strategies to gain participation from untrusting, hard to reach populations. So I returned to the literature in search of a theoretical foundation that would allow me to illustrate the forces surrounding power

and trust in the region while describing the community networks that drive youth professional development initiatives across all 10 counties.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) focuses on the dynamics between power and trust in social exchanges (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015; Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). SET dictates that individuals will engage in an exchange process once they have judged that the relationship will maximize benefits to them and minimize the costs (Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015). Across northeast Colorado, and I presume other communities, SET plays out as parents struggle with who to trust as advocates for their children, employers struggle with entrusting their time and resources to inexperienced and unpredictable youth, and youth struggle with locating trustworthy resources for career exploration and professional development.

I also felt SET played a part in describing why my networks were hesitant to be interviewed for the first pilot. Despite their trust in me and knowing names would not be used in reporting, my networks felt the risk of their data/narrative being published outweighed the benefits of assisting or supporting youth professional development initiatives in their community. Reframing my methods via SET allowed me to redesign the pilot study to include strategies suggested in SET literature to decrease power barriers, increase the community's trust in my work during data collection, and have a frame of reference to analyze data and report the results.

Assumptions

My first assumption was that the workforce development professionals are key stakeholders in youth professional development programming in northeastern Colorado. It could be that one of the local businesses, schools, or organizations maintain stronger networks. But my decision to secure a gatekeeper from this group stemmed from engaging with workforce

development professionals in the region for over 10 years, and knowing the agency would be crucial to disseminating the results of my work.

I also assumed that power and trust are primary barriers to successful collaborations in northeastern Colorado. The communities could merely lack the financial resources to support youth professional development programming. The results could show no direct evidence of Social Exchange Theory taking place in the region or the strategies suggested by SET researchers could prove unsuccessful and inappropriate for recruitment in northeastern Colorado.

My final assumption was that my interviewees would provide insights and outcomes that I have yet to experience. I prefer my work be a catalyst for the communities to discover the potential for combining resources and developing sustainable initiatives, but the outcome of the study could be limited to local agencies using the findings to justify funding for resources and services across the region.

Definitions of Constructs

Before presenting the supporting literature used to inform the study's design, it is important to clarify key constructs that are used extensively throughout the proposal.

Professional Development Opportunity

Definitions of professional development opportunity are found in textbooks across disciplines. In the education industry there are definitions of professional development that focus on both the student (Moon, 2013) and the teacher (Nicholls, 2014). Noe (2014) presented a common business lens toward what constitutes a professional development opportunity in their book, *Employee Development: Issues in Construct Definition and Investigation of Antecedents*. Noe and his colleagues (2014) state professional development opportunities include courses, workshops, seminars, and assignments that influence someone's personal and professional

growth. Rafael Mitchel (2013), a researcher in professional learning communities, provided the most appropriate published definition for the study. Mitchel says professional development, “...suggests ways for educational leaders and managers to foster environments in which individual and organizational learning is optimized through collaboration and shared leadership” (p. 387).

Trainer

As with professional development opportunity, I found a plethora of definitions for trainer from various disciplines. Malik and Morse (2014) make clear distinctions between trainer, mentor, and educator stating that a trainer is concerned with instilling the process and refining skill development. I searched for, but was unable to locate, a more flexible definition of trainer that could encompass academic, theoretical, and skills development, while not forgetting the contributions of family members, friends, or neighbors. It is my experience with youth from the region that when youth seek out advice on career and education more credibility lies with informal relations than formal institutions or governing agencies.

Workforce Development

While Chapter Two contains a detailed description of the inception of the workforce development industry, David Bradley (2013) provides a clear, concise description in his congressional report, *The Workforce Investment Act and the One-Stop Delivery System*, “Workforce development programming provides a combination of education and training services to prepare individuals for work and to help them improve their prospects in the labor market and may include activities such as job search assistance, career counseling, occupational skill training, classroom training, or on-the-job training.” (p. ii)

Youth

Workforce development staff served as gatekeepers to my population therefore I applied the Workforce Investment Act's (WIA; 1998, P.L. 150-220) criterion that states "In the WIA program, any young person, between the age of 14-24 years of age, who may be in school or out of school, and who maintains barriers to education including financial, educational, or environmental" (CWDC, 2015, p. 37).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes the background, theoretical framework and supporting literature used to guide the design of the study. After a brief background surrounding the need for the study, the next section describes the theoretical framework for the study. To better understand the role workforce development plays in youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado, the sections that follow provide a brief history of workforce development's evolution in the United States and examples of recent youth professional development programs in the region.

The economies of the rural communities scattered across northeastern Colorado rely on collaborative efforts across state level workforce and economic agencies, local employers, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions to generate a pool of trained workers to meet local industry needs (Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2014, 2015; National Association of Workforce Boards; 2014; National Governors Association, 2013) and adhere to federal requirements for critical funding (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act HR 133-803, 2015). Over the last two decades this region attempted to initiate an economic shift from agriculture and manufacturing to the industries of healthcare and natural resources (Colorado State University Extension, 2008; Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2014, 2015). Despite efforts from industry leaders, economic development, and workforce development agencies, the agriculture and livestock production industry still leads the region in total employment/jobs, gross regional product, regional exports and imports. Natural resources and health care combined comprise 13 percent of the region's unemployment rate and manufacturing

holds another 10 percent of the region's unemployment rate (Colorado Rural Workforce Centers, 2016).

Extensive literature dating back to the early 1900s depicts the historical development of workforce development agencies across the nation (Bradley, 2013; Voorhees & Harvey, 2005; WAESD, 2012). There is also support for dozens of unique approaches to providing professional development geared to the learning styles and aspirations of rural youth (Arnold et al, 2005; Brown & Schafft, 2011; Strange et al, 2012; Woods, 2012; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Yet for almost a decade, little attention has been paid to the industry shifts in Northeastern Colorado (Colorado State University Extension-NCALG, 2008; Lambert, 2010), and little is known about the depth or quality of the initiatives driving workforce programming in the region.

Theoretical Framework

Many qualitative researchers are participant observers in their studies, meaning they hold a dual role as a researcher (observer) and participant within the population being studied. Depending on the researcher's approach, participation levels can vary from no involvement with little participation to high involvement with ordinary participation (Spradley, 1980). Ethnographer James Spradley (1980) says ordinary participation occurs when the researcher elects to study an environment that the researcher is immersed in to the point that the activities and individuals are "ordinary" and the researcher is actually a member of the population being studied. Having over 10 years of professional and personal experience in northeastern Colorado, I was an ordinary participant in the current study. The foundation to the theoretical framework of the study was balancing my roles of participant and observer as an ordinary participant.

Rural research shows that residents distrust outsiders and elect to solve their own social, economic, or environmental problems by themselves or within their local community (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Hunt-Barron et al, 2015; Millmore, 2015; Strange et al, 2012). Rural communities are known for relying on their unique sense of community to overcome structural and social inequalities. There is extensive literature available to describe the complex and diverse factors that develop a sense of community in rural areas (Arnold et al, 2005; Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Brown & Schafft, 2011; Hunt-Barron et al, 2015; Millmore, 2015; Strange et al, 2012). Most studies on the rural sense of community are founded on the seminal psychological definition presented by Seymour Sarason in 1974,

“...psychological sense of community is the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure” (p. 157).

When I entered the communities of northeastern Colorado as an admissions counselor for Job Corps in 2007 I was charged with developing local networks to support graduates of the program and gain referral sources for non-eligible youth. Through this position I learned that each community in northeastern Colorado has a unique sense of community. The residents realize they are dependent on neighboring communities for employment options, healthcare, and access to state and federal agencies like social security or department of motor vehicle. However their primary loyalty is to the community they live in and residents instinctively protect their way of life, which presents a challenge to implementing inter-community initiatives. The study was framed to investigate if the sense of community between residents in the communities in

northeastern Colorado generates distrust and interferes with implementing youth professional development initiatives across the region.

To ground the study's framework in the constructs of power and trust I elected to infuse the principles of Social Exchange Theory into the design (Blau, 1964; Cook & Emerson, 1978; Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). The premise of Social Exchange Theory (SET) is that the success of personal relationships or collaborative efforts depends on each individual's subjective cost-benefit analysis and the availability of alternative options. SET found its roots in the work of sociologists (Blau, 1964) and social psychologists (Cook & Emerson, 1978; Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993) who sought to describe individual decisions to either enter or avoid interpersonal or social exchange relations. Research using SET shows that if an individual decides the rewards of entering a relationship outweigh the costs or that there are no better alternatives they will enter the exchange (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). For the exchange to be successful and remain stable over time SET research says the individuals must trust that the other participants in the social exchange are committed and the level of rewards and resources gained in the current exchange will remain competitive compared to alternate available options (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015).

In 2014 Emilie Philips Smith and a team of five researchers in Pennsylvania published an article in the American Journal of Community Psychology entitled *Top-down bottom-up and around the jungle gym: A social exchange and networks approach to engaging afterschool programs in implementing evidence based practices*. Smith and her colleagues used SET to guide the implementation and evaluation of a secondary afterschool program by infusing strategies to build trust and commitment through all four phases of the project. During the first phase of the project the team considered the cost-benefit ratio within SET as they researched

local organizations to locate possible collaborators whose mission aligned with the researcher's goal to develop successful youth aftercare programs. In phase two, using the incentives of support training and financial assistance to offset implementation costs, Smith and her colleagues gained access to secondary institutions and organizations via key decision-makers. By phase three the researchers worked to build trust within the institutions and organizations and implement the pilot aftercare program. To maintain trust and to gain the community's commitment to sustain the program, all stakeholders were engaged in the evaluation phase of the project by generating First Person Accounts from community based participants, the afterschool program administrator, and the scientist-practitioners (Smith et al., 2014).

By infusing the SET principles of trust, rapport, and commitment, Smith and her colleagues were able to successfully implement and sustain the aftercare program for two years. The knowledge and insights gained through the process are detailed by Smith et al. (2014) along with recommendations for applying SET in community-based research projects. While learning from the work done by Smith and her colleagues, I realized how their recruitment methods and recommendations could assist in gaining participation from the residents in northeastern Colorado. Table 1 summarizes the strategies used to implement the recommendations from Smith et al. (2014) in the current study.

Table 1. Implementation of Recommendations from Smith et al. (2014)

Recommendation	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognize cost-benefit considerations by providing incentives ▪ Be attentive to sociocultural values and practices ▪ Maintain frequent communication to build trust ▪ Provide ongoing coaching, support, and appreciation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unable to gain financial incentive but strategy is to emphasize the results from this study can be used by many regional stakeholders in their organizational evaluations. ▪ Primary survey provides flexibility for busy schedules and anonymity. Including the option of phone or internet interview also provides multiple modes for residents to participate. ▪ Being a ordinary participant in the region ensures frequent contact. Will also rely on the trust built through my existing professional networks. ▪ I will coach all regional workforce staff along with a convenient sample of my professional networks to ensure recruitment for the online survey and develop follow up contacts thanking my networks and respondents for their participation.

SET research provided strategies to address some of the barriers I found in gaining interviewees during the pilot study. It could also explain some of my observations and experiences working with youth and their families in northeastern Colorado. Social psychologists and respected SET theorists Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) found that SET operates using eight basic assumptions, four related to the nature of individuals and four related to the nature of relationships. Table 2 summarizes the assumptions Sabatelli and Shehan found embedded within the social exchange theory framework. The individual assumptions on the left side of the table focus on how and why the individual enters or avoids social exchange. As I reviewed Sabatelli and Shehan's work I realized the relationship assumptions of SET on the right side of the table, their relationship assumptions, describe some of the factors involved in developing youth initiatives in northeastern Colorado.

Table 2. Basic assumptions within Social Exchange Theory (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993)

Individual Assumptions of SET	Relationship Assumptions of Set
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The individual seeks rewards and avoids punishment ▪ Because rewards and costs are unknown at the start of exchanges the individual uses expectations of rewards and costs as a guide ▪ Individuals are rational and are only limited to assess rewards and costs by the information they possess ▪ The criteria used to evaluate rewards and costs vary from person to person and can change over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social exchanges are inter-dependent, the ability to gain profit in a relationship depends on the ability to provide individuals rewards ▪ Social exchanges are regulated by social norms (reciprocity, justice, and fairness) ▪ Trust and commitment result from the experiences of individuals before and during the social exchange and help sustain the relationship over time ▪ The dynamics of interaction and the stability of social exchanges over time are based on the levels of attraction and dependence experienced by the individuals

Chapter Three describes how Sabatelli and Shehan’s (1993) relationship assumptions within SET were used to analyze the data from the current study. To illustrate how the relationship assumptions were used, consider the third assumption that trust and commitment result from the experiences of individuals before and during the social exchange and help sustain the relationship over time. The current study assumes that power and trust are primary barriers to successful initiatives in northeastern Colorado. If Sabatelli and Shehan’s assumption is true, then my assumption that low levels of trust between individuals and agencies negatively effects the professional development opportunities for youth in northeastern Colorado should hold true as well.

Workforce Development Defined

Workforce development is a federally regulated network of state agencies that provide education and workforce training for dislocated or underemployed workers across the nation (Bradley, 2013; Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2012, 2015; National Association of Workforce Boards; 2014). Several state and federal agencies ensure the history of workforce development is readily available (Bradley, 2013; CWDC, 2012, 2015; OVAE, 2012; Institute for

a Competitive Workforce, 2009; Secretary of Labor, 2013; WASED, 2012). Washington State's Economic Security Department (WASED) compiled a detailed historical account of workforce development for their Employment and Career Development Division Training Academy in 2012.

Figure 1 presents a timeline using the WASED report to depict the evolution of workforce development in the United States. The events along the top of the timeline describe the organizational shifts that workforce development agencies have undergone since the industry's inception in the early 1900's and how these events correspond to the legislation used to guide the development of the American Job Centers (AJCs) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA; 2015 HR 803). Today the AJC's provide services through a system of 3,000 agency locations across the country (Bradley, 2013).

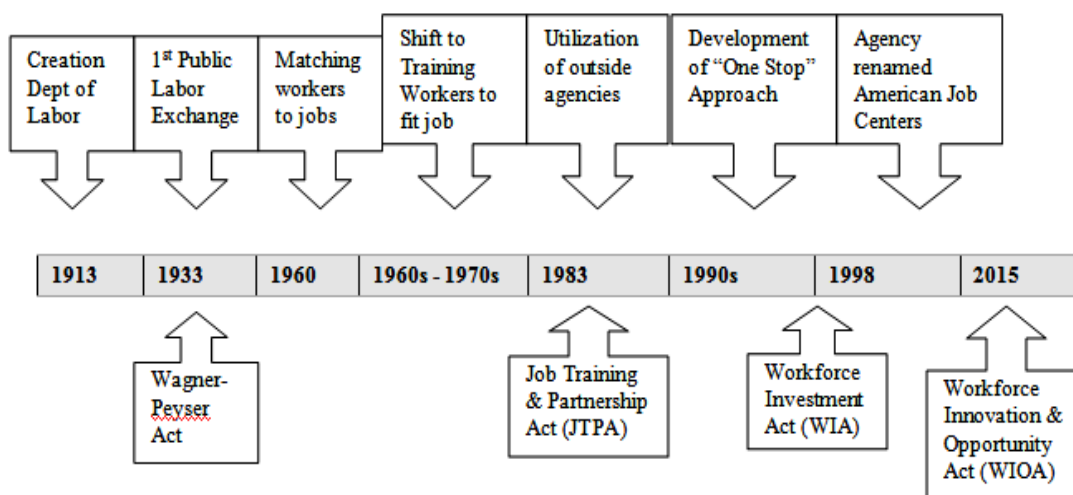


Figure 1. Timeline of Workforce Development in the United States

The creation of the US Department of Labor (USDOL) in 1913 provided the foundation for the first public labor exchange service to match workers to industry specific jobs (WASED, 2012). For decades the USDOL focused their efforts on matching workers to jobs, but beginning

in the 1960s the focus began to shift toward training workers to match jobs. The organizational shift toward training led the way for researchers to point out the need for remedial education, life skills development, and on-the-job-training for economically disadvantaged workers (Bradley, 2013; Secretary of Labor 2013; WAESD, 2012).

The redirection of the USDOL on training disadvantaged and dislocated workers combined with the need to provide the private sector a stronger voice in the decision-making process contributed to the generation of the Job Training and Partnership Act being passed in 1983 (P.L. 97-300). Shortly after USDOL created the Employment and Training Administration to regulate grants for states and counties to fund collaborations between agencies dedicated to providing employers and jobseekers a “one-stop shop” for job training and employment needs (Bradley, 2013; Voorhees & Harvey, 2005; WASED, 2012).

The Employment and Training Administration developed the one-stop concept into the passing of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA; P.L. 105-220) in 1998. WIA allowed workforce development agencies to develop community driven Workforce Investment Boards to fund and oversee localized workforce programming. Workforce Investment Boards include membership from other local agencies like social services, law enforcement, and the division of vocational rehabilitation. The boards also gain members and additional resources from community industries such as education and nonprofit support organizations. Shifting to a holistic approach of developing and maintaining a national workforce WIA provided the opportunity for workforce development agencies to become the hub in the wheel of collaborations between agencies, educators, organizations, and employers. Under WIA and through the one-stops jobseekers gained access to support and training while employers gained direct access to a pool of trained workers (Bradley, 2013; Secretary of Labor 2013; WAESD, 2012).

In July of 2015 WIA was restructured to attune to shifting industries and to infuse community and agency participation in all workforce development programming. After almost two decades placing workforce at the hub of community collaborations, the Employment and Training Administration directed workforce staff to shift into a support role. To increase program sustainability and strengthen communities the restructuring required decreasing the community's reliance on federal funding by increasing collaboration and generating community wide initiatives. Included in the restructuring, all one-stops were renamed American Job Centers (AJCs) and workforce programs transitioned to meet new guidelines set by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, 2015; HR 803). Although WIOA is still in its infancy, the Employment and Training Administration presented the guidelines in Table 3 to assist state level AJCs in transitioning workforce programming to WIOA regulations. The guidelines emphasize a shift from being the hub of workforce training to be the facilitators of community wide sustainable initiatives.

The governing principles of WIOA for workforce development professionals highlights the ideal role of workforce development in initiating, facilitating, and “reporting a high level of fidelity” in funded workforce development programs across the United States. WIOA also shifted the focus of youth programming by placing more emphasis on providing services to out of school youth than those attending an educational program. Each AJC was required to develop a strategic plan that addressed the guidelines provided by the Employment and Training Administration and suggested initiatives specific to their local area resources and needs. While national and state level workforce development professionals are showing positive support for WIOA (National Association of Workforce Boards, 2014), the state and regional level capacity to facilitate the transition and evaluate local initiatives is still unknown.

Table 3. Governing principles of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2015

Principle	Description
States align programs and ensure integrated services through a unified strategic plan and shared governance	Every state collaborates across core programs to create a single unified and integrated strategic plan...States collaborate with AJC partner programs and other partners at the state and local levels to produce WIOA strategic plans. States use the certification process available in their area and competition to help achieve this vision and ensure continuous improvement.
Workforce Boards on Strategy	As strategic leaders, state and local workforce boards, in partnership with governors and chief elected officials, facilitate public-private partnerships; support sector strategies and career pathways...ensure streamlined operations and service delivery excellence.
States and local areas align workforce programs with regional economic development strategies	AJCs, program leaders, and elected officials share a common vision and govern the system regionally...align workforce policies and services with regional economies; and support sector strategies tailored to their needs.
The AJC network and partner programs are organized to provide high-quality services to individuals and employers	AJCs and partners must increase coordination of programs and resources to support a comprehensive system that seamlessly provides integrated services accessible to all jobseekers, workers, and businesses.
States and local areas promote accountability and transparency via data driven decisions and informed customer choice	State and local leaders ensure investments in employment and education/training programs are evidence-based and data-driven...Programs are accountable to participants and taxpayers

**Adapted from USDOL Training and employment guidance letter 19-4, February 19, 2015*

How Workforce Development Assists Youth in Northeastern Colorado

The mission of the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is to create a business-focused workforce that effectively helps prepare Coloradans for the jobs of today and tomorrow (CWDC, 2014). The workforce system monitored by the CWDC includes 19 workforce regions and over 70 American Job Centers (AJCs) and satellites across Colorado. Figure 2 geographically presents the workforce regions and AJCs in Colorado, each dot pinpointing the municipality where an AJC is located.

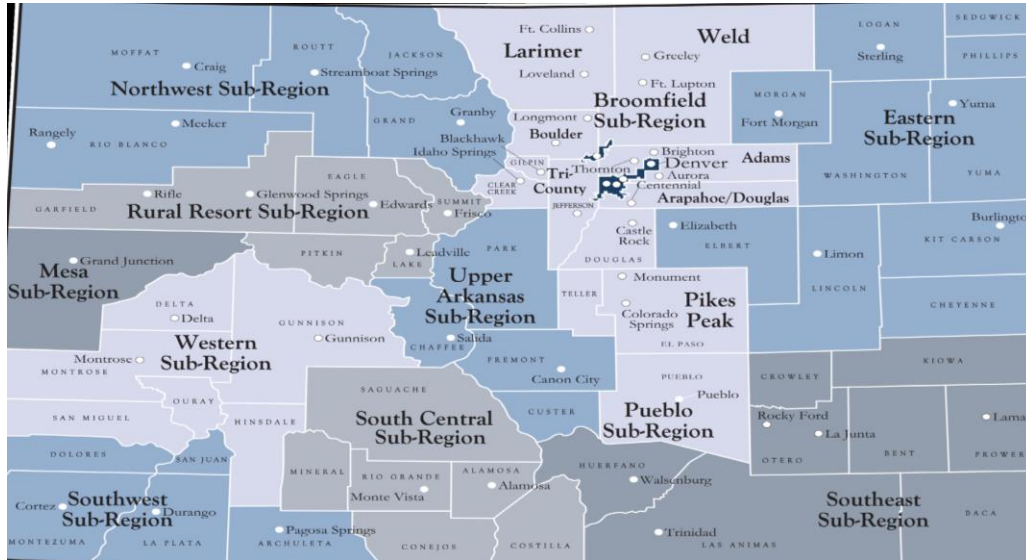


Figure 2. Map of American Job Centers by Region in Colorado

The CWDC charges the AJCs with engaging employers and educational institutions, providing youth and adult job seekers with labor market information, providing skills assessments and assistance with job searching and placement, and providing funding for localized professional development training programs (CWDC, 2014). Through the AJCs, the CWDC develops employment assistance and vocational training programs using localized networks of employers and educators to ensure outcomes meet local industry demands. The legislation guiding and funding workforce programming separates youth (ages 14-24) and adult (ages 21+) programming. The overlap of age criterion ensures youth gain focused guidance during critical stages of career and professional development (WIOA, 2015; HR 803).

The eastern region of the CWDC (pictured top right in Figure 2) includes 10 counties: Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma (See Appendix B for general demographics on each county). Six of the counties in the eastern region maintain an AJC; the remaining four counties are serviced by regional staff who travel to satellite locations. Of the six counties that maintain an AJC, four of them are single

staff sites which limit the staff's capacity to address every community's needs (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016). The eastern AJCs currently have eight staff members dedicated to guiding community initiatives that provide professional development for youth (ages 14-24) across all 10 counties (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016).

In 2008, Colorado State University Extension (CSUE) and the Northeastern Colorado Association of Local Governments (NCALG) reported labor market results from 9,300 households surveyed in Northeastern Colorado. Although the study found that 92 percent of the 11,000 youth ages 16-18 reported living in the households were intending to graduate from high school, the researchers also discovered that 23 percent of the unemployed labor force in Northeastern Colorado was youth ages 18-24 years of age. The region's higher than average graduation rate combined with higher than average youth unemployment mirrors data gathered from rural communities across the country (Brown & Schafft, 2011, Office of Vocational & Adult Education, 2012). But the CSUE-NCALG study reported that the region also suffers from "extremely scattered and inaccessible community assistance programs" (CSUE-NCALG, 2008, p.15), which differs from outcomes of other communities in Colorado (CWDC, 2012, 2015; Office of Vocational & Adult Education, 2012).

In accordance with the Workforce Opportunity and Investment Act (WIOA, 2015; HR 803), the region recently submitted a strategic plan that details the region's capacity to meet WIOA requirements for community wide initiatives that support local industry needs. Several possible barriers to achieving WIOA requirements were listed in the plan including geographic barriers such as no public transportation to cover the 17,000 square mile region. Socio-economic barriers were also reported like jobseekers' inability to speak or read English, and only four licensed day care centers to care for the estimated 6,374 children under five years old in the

region (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016). The plan also reports that in 2015, 47.2 percent of the region's education level was limited to a high school diploma or less while critical industries such as healthcare, utilities, and transportation struggled to find employees with basic technical and social skills (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016).

The Eastern WIOA Regional Plan (2016) also presents some strong examples of how a few communities in the region have implemented successful youth professional development initiatives. For example, 2015 graduates from the wind technology program at Northeastern Junior College in Sterling achieved 100 percent job placement rate. Also at Northeastern Junior College a program called Jump Start into Nursing provides advising and financial assistance to youth ages 17-24 having barriers to their education, including assistance in completing their secondary education while attending introductory courses at the college.

While these successful programs are making a difference, they are based in one of two postsecondary institutions in the 17,000 square mile area. Even with the advent of online instruction, access is limited to those who find financial assistance or those who can afford to pay the cost of tuition themselves. The region also struggles with unstable internet access which decreases the effectiveness and quality of the college's distance education programs. The workforce's regional plan recommended a more localized face to face approach to address the reported gap in basic employment skills and language barriers in the region (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016). To achieve the goals in their regional plan and develop region-wide initiatives, workforce development professionals will have to develop strategies that address each county's unique sense of community and overcome individual residents' concerns of changes in their way of living.

Summary

Recent federal legislation (WIOA, 2015; HR 803) requires workforce development professionals across the nation to facilitate community-wide programs that will generate a pool of trained workers to meet local industry needs. Workforce development professionals in northeastern Colorado are charged with meeting the requirements across 10 rural counties, each maintaining its own unique sense of community. Based on local employment and economic data, northeastern Colorado is struggling to overcome the general skills gap and language barriers that exist across the region due to limited postsecondary options and community resources (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016). To achieve the goals in their regional plan and develop region-wide initiatives, workforce development professionals in northeastern Colorado will have to develop strategies that address each county's unique sense of community and overcome individual residents' concerns about changes in their way of living. As an ordinary participant and using Social Exchange Theory, I designed the current study to investigate how power and trust affect the region's capacity to develop sustainable youth professional development programming. The results of this study were shared with workforce development professionals and their networks to add to their knowledge of the region and assist them in developing strategies to develop region-wide youth professional development initiatives.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of the study was to describe the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives across 10 counties in northeastern Colorado by interpreting open-ended surveys from community residents and researcher observations. The following questions were developed to guide the study:

1. What constitutes a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado?
2. Who are the stakeholders involved in youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado?
3. How does power and trust support or impede youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado?

The next section presents the design used to address the questions above followed by a description of the sample's characteristics and recruitment process. The third section outlines the process of developing online surveys and the data collection process. Finally the approach to analysis section describes how my observations and survey data were interpreted.

Research Design

The study was approached by an ordinary participant via a constructive, interpretive lens to examine whether and how the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado are influenced by power and trust. Analyzing qualitative data through the interpretive paradigm generates an iterative process of evaluating various interpretations to understand a social phenomenon (Glesne, 2011; Guba, 1990). James Spradley (1980) states that an ordinary participant functions in the highest level of involvement possible for a researcher

because they are an insider, a member of the population being studied which decreases the researcher's explicit awareness of cultural norms. As an ordinary participant with over 10 years of personal and professional experience in the region, I balanced my roles as participant and researcher by taking time for the reflection built into the iterative process while relying on member checking and my committee to ensure a wide angle lens was used to analyze the data.

Traditionally the constructs of power and trust were studied via long term ethnographic or historical investigative approaches (Coleman, 1987; Ironside, 2015). I implemented thematic analysis framed by Social Exchange Theory (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015; Smith et al., 2014) into the design of the current study. Social Exchange Theory (SET) dictates that if the rewards of entering a relationship outweigh the costs or if there are no better alternatives an individual or organization will enter an exchange (Homans, 1961; Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). SET research has found that infusing the principles of trust, rapport, and commitment into community-based research projects generates higher participation and lengthens program sustainability (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). SET allowed me to implement recruitment strategies that were proven to increase trust and participation from potential respondents while providing a framework to help guide the analysis.

Sample Characteristics and Recruitment Process

Rural communities are often sustained via collaborations between local leaders and agencies that pool their resources to address gaps in services and limited funding (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Brown & Schafft, 2011; Christman, 2012). These cross-community networks rely on participation from individuals working as ambassadors to ensure their community's needs are met (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Christman, 2012; Handcock & Gile, 2011).

The sample for the study was the cross-community network involved in youth professional development across 10 counties in northeastern Colorado. The cross-community network in the region includes ambassadors from: secondary schools, post-secondary schools, law enforcement, court/judicial, employers/industry, workforce development, economic development, social services, and non-profit support organizations (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016). Relying on my ordinary participant role, I accessed the cross-community network in northeastern Colorado via the workforce development professionals who are charged at the state and federal level with ensuring a pool of trained workers to meet the needs of local industries (CWDC, 2014; WIOA, 2015; HR 803).

The 10 counties serviced by the eastern region of the Colorado Workforce Development Council's American Job Centers (AJC) include: Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma (CWDC, 2014). Table 4 presents a few characteristics of the region compared to the state. Six of the counties in the eastern region maintain an AJC. The remaining four counties are serviced by regional workforce staff that travel to satellite locations such as family centers and department of human services. The eastern region AJCs employ 13 full time staff members and two part time staff members who are charged with facilitating region-wide initiatives to meet employer needs while providing critical services to an average 10,000 unemployed and underemployed residents each year (CWDC, 2014; Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016).

Table 4. Sample Characteristics Compared to State

	Eastern Region¹	Colorado²
Geographic Area (square miles)	17,000	104,100
Population	112,397	5,272,086
Unemployment Rate (percent 2015)	3.5	4.4
Number of High Schools	38	647
Postsecondary Institutions	2	140

1-Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016

2-Colorado Department of Labor and Employment-LMI Databases

<https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/Default.aspx> retrieved 3/25/16

The sample characteristics in Table 4 present the geographic area and population served by the eastern region AJCs while highlighting the limited postsecondary options available to provide training for the unemployed, underemployed, and youth in the region. Detailed population and economic data by county is presented in Appendix B. To focus recruitment on individuals who are a part of the cross-community network dedicated to developing and maintaining professional development initiatives for youth in northeastern Colorado, the email invitation (Appendix C) containing the link to the primary online survey (Appendix D) was sent to all workforce development professionals in the region with a request to forward to their community networks.

Emilie Philips Smith and her colleagues (2014) implemented and sustained an aftercare school program in Pennsylvania for two years. Through their experience they provided four recommendations for applying Social Exchange Theory in community-based research projects. Table 5 summarizes how I implemented the recommendations from Smith and her colleagues into my recruitment strategies for the study.

The strategies incorporated into the study included emphasizing the resident professionals' desire to develop and strengthen youth programming throughout the region thereby relying on intrinsic incentives rather than monetary incentives to address the first recommendation listed in Table 5. Stakeholders in youth professional development programming

should see the benefit from using results from this study in their own reports and funding proposals which addressed the first recommendation

Table 5. Implementation of Smith et al.. (2014) Recommendations

Recommendation	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognize cost-benefit considerations by providing incentives ▪ Be attentive to sociocultural values and practices ▪ Maintain frequent communication to build trust ▪ Provide ongoing coaching, support, and appreciation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unable to gain financial incentive but strategy was to emphasize the results from this study can be used by many regional stakeholders in their organizational evaluations. ▪ Initial survey provides flexibility for busy schedules and anonymity. Including the option of phone or internet interview also provides multiple modes for residents to participate. ▪ Emersion in the region ensures frequent contact. Also relied on the trust built through my existing professional networks in the region. ▪ I coached regional workforce staff along with a convenient sample of my professional networks to ensure recruitment for the online survey and develop follow up contacts thanking my networks and respondents for their participation.

To incorporate Smith et al.'s (2014) second recommendation, attune to the sociocultural values and practices of the area, I developed multiple modes for participation to address specific values and practices in northeastern Colorado. An online survey allowed respondents a flexible and anonymous mode to self-describe their role in and perceptions of youth professional development initiatives in the region. In addition, I offered the option to be interviewed either via phone or online video call. The decision to provide multiple modes for residents to participate was based on my long term experience working with youth and their families in the region, and to attune to the second recommendation from Smith and her colleagues. Providing multiple modes for residents to participate provided an anonymous mode via survey to those concerned that direct quotes from an interview would be recognized in published reports while also providing flexibility to those residents who would like to participate but do not have the time for

a lengthy interview. However, contrary to expectations, I did not receive any requests for interviews.

In regard to Smith et al.'s (2014) third recommendation, maintain frequent communications to build trust, my emersion as an educator, mentor, and advocate for youth allowed me to build trust through frequent communication with the youth, their families, and the professionals across the region many years before data collection began. Through my roles I earned the reputation of a strong advocate for youth and gained the trust of other long term advocates for youth who I relied on for recruitment and feedback from their cross-community networks. I addressed Smith and her colleagues' final recommendation by providing ongoing support both at the individual level, as educator and mentor, and at the communal level as researcher and advocate for youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado.

Development of Online Surveys

The design included the development of two open-ended surveys that were programmed for online data collection using Qualtrics while ensuring each question would address the three guiding questions for the study. The primary survey was designed for respondents 18 years and older (Appendix D) and consisted of 10 items. Table 6 provides each primary survey question in relation to the guiding questions for the study. Respondents were also provided the option of a phone or online interview instead of completing the survey. The interview option required the primary survey to be extended into a script (Appendix H). To ensure youth ages 14-17 were included in the study a youth online survey (Appendix E) and interview script (Appendix H) were also developed. The youth survey consisted of one question requiring respondents to select which county they live in and seven open-ended questions. Although I received no requests for interviews or youth participation, the approved documents are included in the appendices.

Table 6. Primary Survey Questions in Relation to Guiding Questions

Primary Survey Question	Guiding Question
Which county do you live in? ---Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma	2
Which of these roles describes you? (Select all that apply) --Agency State/Federal Representative, Court/Judicial Representative, Economic Development, Educator, Employer, Parent, Law Enforcement Representative, Learner/Student, Nonprofit Organization Representative, Social Services Representative, Workforce Development, Youth (18-24), None of these describe me	1, 2
Based on the role(s) you selected above, please describe how you play a part in youth professional development programming in your area?	1, 2
Please share what organizations or individuals contributed to your own professional development and how they helped you.	1, 2
What are your professional development needs?	2
What agencies or organizations are involved in youth professional development in your area?	2
Please describe any events or activities surrounding youth professional development you have experienced in your community.	1
How do you think youth professional development programming could be improved in your community?	1
Knowing that schools, colleges, employers, and agencies across northeastern Colorado must work together, please describe how you think trust plays a role in developing region-wide youth professional development initiatives.	3
Do you have any additional information to share regarding the professional development opportunities for youth in your area?	1, 2, 3

Collecting data online requires attention to the format used to direct respondents through the survey (Smyth & Pearson, 2011), the security awarded to the respondents (Bull, Levine, Schmiede, & Santelli, 2014), and the flexibility the respondent is awarded in their response (Callaghan, Graff, & Davies, 2013). Using an online format that respondents can easily navigate through requires understanding the target population and limiting the use of graphics or audio files that can impede the respondent's progress through the survey. In their book chapter, *Internet Survey Methods: A Review of Strengths, Weaknesses, and Innovations*, Smyth and Pearson (2011) discuss how to develop internet based surveys that address internet coverage and

sampling issues while minimizing measurement error. Smyth and Pearson state that understanding the target population for the survey is critical to reducing issues from non-response and incomplete surveys because if the respondent does not understand the language presented or cannot understand how to navigate the survey, they will simply close their browser window and opt out of the survey.

The survey format and questions designed for the study addressed Smyth and Pearson's (2011) recommendations by using language that is clear and easily understood while presenting each survey in a single screen format with no time limit. To ensure the language would be easily understood by the cross-community network in northeastern Colorado the primary survey questions were field-tested. Five individuals from another cross-community network in Larimer and Jackson counties in Colorado completed the survey and provided feedback. Based on feedback the primary survey questions were altered and re-presented to the group to ensure clarity.

The single screen electronic presentation allowed respondents time and the ability to scroll and review all their answers prior to submitting the survey. The language in the primary online survey ensured responses were focused on the respondent's experience in youth professional development programming in the region. But some youth, especially those 14-17 years old, have limited workforce experience which required attention during the development of the survey that presents language focused on the youths' experience with organizations and individuals.

Another major consideration in the development of the online surveys used in the study was ensuring the respondents felt confident in their anonymity and that their information would remain in a secure environment. When Sheana Bull and her colleagues recruited HIV-positive

youth via social media they found that the youth were distrusting of invitations via social media and cautioned researchers about approaching target populations through indirect channels (Bull, Levine, Schmiede, & Santelli, 2014). Using Qualtrics for data collection ensured that the connection for data transfer was secured from the front-user (respondent) to the end-user (researcher). The survey allowed all respondents to remain anonymous with the exemption of youth ages 14-17 who would initially be identified to gain parental consent, but assigned a respondent code (e.g.: youth1, youth2, youth3) to protect their identity during data collection and analysis.

Data Collection

Once the design was complete, a proposal was sent to the internal Research Integrity and Compliance Office at Colorado State University for approval. Approval was gained on October 11, 2016 (certification presented in Appendix I). Data collection began on October 17, 2016. Surveys were collected through January 17, 2016 and were sent via Qualtrics secured connection for analysis.

After the initial invitation was sent, I continuously followed up with workforce staff and my cross-community networks to ensure the invitation reached key stakeholders and I offered to attend local meetings to answer any questions regarding the study. Over the course of three months, workforce representatives re-sent the email invitation to their networks every 3-5 weeks reminding potential respondents of the importance of the results from the study and the impending end to the data collection window.

Approach to Analysis

The primary dataset for analysis included the survey transcripts from Qualtrics. To interpret data, I also relied on knowledge gained through a secondary data set, which included

my observational notes and all correspondence with community members. Although youth surveys and interview scripts were designed and included in the invitation to participate, I received no requests from youth or for interviews during the data collection period.

Ethnographers immersed in the cultures they study often include their observations in the dissemination of the results (Coleman, 1987; Litchman, 2013; Smith et al., 2014; Spradley, 1980). Spradley (1980) points out that the ordinary participant rarely has the time to develop formal field notes and instead relies on recording observations after the fact in their journal. I worked remotely during the data collection phase and relied on a Word document formatted as a timeline which allowed me to track phases of the study, communications, and observations within one document. Working remotely provided me the unique opportunity to have an electronic trail of data via emails, texts, and phone calls that provided the foundation to my observational notes.

Within a few hours of any event or contact I would create an entry in the timeline to preserve as much detail as possible. When we began working with the data set as a whole, the iterative process of qualitative analysis took hold in my mind as I made connections between the data and my experience in the region. I resent my observational notes to my co-coder every few days because I added data as I coded data, a process common in qualitative analysis (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Glesne, 2011; Litchman, 2013). As the analysis progressed, I extended my observational notes to include further contacts from community networks such as whether or not an individual said they completed the survey, was supportive of the study, or provided the basis for one of the vignettes created for Chapter Four. The findings from this study include observations to provide depth by explaining how cultural rules translate into the themes

discovered during the analysis. Table 7 provides a snapshot of the data set for the study that highlights details of the observational notes used for analysis.

Table 7. Snapshot of Data Set Used for Analysis

KEY/DESCRIPTIONS	COUNTS
General Survey Transcript Counts for Dataset *cut intro to survey and set text to 12pt font	Total Pages 19 Average Size 1 page Number of Respondents providing 3+pages 4
Timeline Items	Total Pages Observational Notes 12 Total Entries 48 Stages of Process (not communication) 2 Email Contacts 26 (31pgs approx. 28 days) Phone Contacts 7 (10hrs 48min) Text Contacts 10 Online/Hangout 3 (8hrs 50min)
Details of Conversations and Reflection Notes	Member Checking/Updates 17 *includes committee, gatekeeper, & co-coder Positive Support for Study 12 Neutral Support for Study 2 Contact with Professional Networks 10 Contact with Former Students 10
Outcomes from Contact	Completed Survey 5 Did not Complete Survey 12 Recruited Respondents 7 Added Experience/Insight to Findings 9 Added Experience/Insight to Discussions 5

Traditionally thematic analysis requires the researcher apply the iterative process of inductive coding, reflection, thematic coding and re-coding until a point of saturation (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Glesne, 2011; Litchman, 2013). For this study codes were developed via inductive coding by me and one former workforce development professional trained in the steps of qualitative coding. Including a former workforce development professional in the coding process brought member-checking and inter-rater reliability into the design, strategies recommended by researchers who use qualitative methods in community studies (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Brown & Schafft, 2011; Coleman, 1987; Smith et al., 2014). We used

the three guiding questions to inductively code each of the eight open ended questions of the primary survey. For example all responses to “What agencies or organizations are involved in youth professional development in your area?” were reviewed to see if there were any connections to the guiding questions for the study.

Once preliminary codes were discovered, the data set was analyzed through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET). Specifically we reviewed each survey transcript (as a whole, not individual items), all emails, and my observational notes to find connections to the four basic assumptions Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) found in applying SET to the success or failure of social relationships or organizational partnerships. For example, the first relationship assumption is that social exchanges are inter-dependent, the ability to gain profit in a relationship depends on the ability to provide individuals rewards (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). If the assumption holds true then the data would provide examples of residents referring to incentives and rewards in their survey responses.

Respondents were asked to provide examples of youth professional development activities in their community and speak to their perception of how trust affects the success of developing region-wide youth initiatives. Responses to these questions were used to address two more of Sabatelli and Shehan’s (1993) assumptions, that social exchanges are regulated by social norms (reciprocity, justice, and fairness), and that trust and commitment result from the experiences of individuals before and during the social exchange and help sustain the relationship over time.

Sabatelli and Shehan’s (1993) final assumption is the dynamics of interaction and the stability of social exchanges over time are based on the levels of attraction and dependence experienced by the individuals. If this assumption holds true then the data should present themes

of long-term relationships being cited by respondents and interviewees as reasons for success, along with statements of individuals or organizations “not caring” as reasons for failed initiatives.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This study combined data from open-ended surveys and observations to develop an interpretation of the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado. After three months of recruitment a total of nine primary surveys were submitted via Qualtrics. No requests for interviews or youth surveys were received. Once the nine surveys were coded, the codes were used to review my observational notes and electronic communications. The three questions developed to guide the study will present the findings from the analysis in the following sections.

1. What constitutes a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado?
2. Who are the stakeholders involved in youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado?
3. How does power and trust support or impede youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado?

The presentation of the questions is re-ordered in the following sections to allow survey demographics to be presented first followed by a description of the stakeholders, which includes demographics. The third section presents findings surrounding what constitutes a youth professional development initiative in the region, from the perspective of participants, and the fourth section presents findings on how power and trust support or impede initiatives in northeastern Colorado. Although each question of the survey (Appendix D) was designed and tested to ensure they were tied directly to one of the three guiding questions, we found data “scattered” across responses. To ensure clarity, the additional scattered data was not included in the next four sections. Instead a section was developed to present the additional findings found

during survey coding. Then I reframe the data through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993) to present the findings from the second round of coding. Finally I present additional findings based on the observational data collected.

Demographics

The first question on the survey directed respondents to select which of the 10 counties they reside in. Three respondents reported their residence in Logan County and two respondents selected Lincoln County. The other four respondents reported residence in Elbert, Morgan, Washington, and Yuma counties. Four counties in the region were not represented in the findings.

The second question of the survey presented a list of 12 general roles and asked respondents to select all the roles that applied to them. Table 8 includes all roles presented to respondents and how many self-described as each role.

Table 8. Responses for Question 2 Which of these roles describe you (Select all that apply)

Role	Number of reports	Roles Not Selected	
Workforce Development Representative	4	▪ Court/Judicial Representative	▪ Social Services Representative
Non-Profit Representative	3	▪ Economic Development Representative	▪ Youth
Parent	3	▪ Employer	▪ None of these describe me
Agency/State Representative	2	▪ Law Enforcement Representative	
Educator	1	▪ Learner/Student	

Six of the nine respondents selected only one role from the list and framed the rest of their responses to that role. One of the six respondents self-reported as an agency/state

representative then described their role in workforce development programming. Another respondent self-reported as only a parent and described their professional roles in another question. Overall only two respondents selected multiple roles and only five of the 12 roles were represented in the analysis.

Who are the stakeholders involved in youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado

A total of four survey questions -- six, seven, eight, and nine -- combined with the demographic questions were designed to describe the stakeholders involved in youth professional development initiatives in the region. The third question presented in the primary survey asked respondents to describe their role(s) based on the one(s) they selected in the second question (see Table 6 for findings to the second question). Table 9 presents the codes developed for the third question and how many respondents described their roles in that manner.

Table 9. Codes Developed for Question 3 Based on the role(s) you selected above, please describe how you play a part in youth professional development programming in your area

Code	Number of reports	Code	Number of reports
Provide paid work experience	4	Provide soft skills training	4
Assist with job search	3	Participate in job/career fairs	3
Develop incentives for youth to progress in school	2	Participate in Interagency Programs	2
Provide exposure and access to options after high school	2	Work with employers	2
Guide and advocate for my child	2	Attend parent teacher conferences and district meetings	1
Workforce development and parent	1		

Question three of the primary survey produced the strongest agreement across respondents. One parent included attending parent-teacher conferences and school district meetings along with advocating for his/her child. Another respondent selected three roles from the list then self-described his/her roles as, “Mostly in workforce development but also have 2 children in the rural public school system.” This response required the development of a single code because the coders could not assume roles based on the general description.

The fourth question of the primary survey asked the respondents to share what organizations or individuals contributed to their professional development and how. The how portion of this question was included in the findings for the description of what constitutes youth professional development in the region. The findings of coding question four to describe the stakeholders produced 17 references to organizations and eight references to individuals who contributed to the respondents’ professional development. Details of the findings for question four are presented in Table 10. Organizations are listed on the left and individuals are listed on the right.

Table 10. Codes and Sub Codes Developed for Question 4 Please share what organizations or individuals contributed to your professional development and how they helped you

Organization Code with Sub Codes	Number of reports	Individual Code with Sub Codes	Number of reports
Organizations	17	Individuals	8
Workforce Development	5	Employer	4
Community Organization	5	Family Member/Friend	2
Educational Institution	3	Educator	1
Department of Vocational Rehabilitation	2	Healthcare Representative	1
Judicial Agency	1		
Economic Development	1		

By appearances the findings displayed in Table 10 show relatively strong agreement across respondents, but it took extended time for the coders to come to agreement because some respondents composed detailed replies and others entered only three or four words into the textbox. For example five respondents noted assistance from a workforce development agency, but only one respondent typed “workforce agency.” Two other respondents listed Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, one respondent listed Sterling Workforce Center, and another listed Morgan Workforce Center. Two respondents listed organizations that funded their youth programing, and one respondent provided a very insightful response to this question,

“Several community peers, such as our local Community College president, have served as mentors for me - especially when I was new to the area. Rural communities can be isolating socially, as this area was and still is for those who are either new or not ingrained.”

In relation to this guiding question concerning who is involved in youth professional development in the region, the coders contemplated developing the code “insider/outsider” or “isolation” to capture the respondent’s description of the environment surrounding the stakeholders but it was decided to forgo heading down that path without having agreement from another respondent in the study.

The fifth survey question asked, “What are your professional development needs?” Outside of the last question of the survey, the open comment field, this question produced the shortest responses of any other question and almost every response was unique. Two respondents noted a need for additional training on how to engage youth. One parent spoke to the needs of their child, specifically the need for access and long term programming in remote counties for youth with special needs. The other six reported were:

- The need for more time to focus on youth programming

- Training in the needs of the youth in their area
- A better understanding of the gaps and options in their area
- Help in tracking and reporting paperwork
- Clear directions for tasks/duties
- Need better access to training, few options in the area

The final question developed to address this guiding question, question number six, directly asked respondents to list the agencies and organization involved in youth professional development programming in their area. As expected this question produced the most codes and required detailed sub codes to capture the responses. The codes and sub codes for question number six are displayed in Table 11.

Findings for the sixth survey question showed that all nine respondents listed schools and workforce development as active in youth professional development programming in their area. One parent stressed that the organizations and agencies send representatives periodically to his/her area but there were no agencies, organizations, or services dedicated to youth in their community. Also six respondents listed programs in other questions of the survey that were not included in Table 9 but will be presented in the last section of this chapter.

Overall analysis of the four questions presented in this section combined with the demographic questions showed a strong presence of workforce development and education institutions. These two key stakeholders collaborate with employers and organizations to develop localized initiatives targeted toward youth professional development. There was little evidence of region wide initiatives. As an ordinary participant I agree with these themes however I feel the low participation in this study and no representation from four counties illustrates another pattern throughout the region, the lack of stakeholder involvement in region wide initiatives.

Table 11. Codes and Sub Codes for Question 6 What agencies or organizations are involved in youth professional development programming in your area?

Code	Reports	Code	Reports
<u>Schools</u>	9	<u>Community Organizations</u>	14
Sub Codes		Sub Codes	
High Schools (2)		Family Resource Center (4)	
Colleges (2)		Charitable Organizations (2)	
Schools (2)		Churches (2)	
GOAL Academy		Game Plan for Success	
Northeastern Junior		Non Profit Organizations	
College		Rural Communities Resource Center	
School Districts		Washington County Connections	
		The Independence Center	
<u>Workforce Development</u>	9	Your Community Foundation	
Sub Codes			
Morgan Workforce			
Center (3)			
Youth Council (2)			
Limon Workforce Center			
Sterling Workforce			
Center			
Yuma Workforce Center			
Workforce Agency			
Interagency Oversight	5	“Many” or “There are a lot”	4
Group			
Department of Human	3	Division of Vocational	2
Services		Rehabilitation	
Hospitals/Clinics	2	Committees/Boards	2
Local Businesses	2	Individuals	2
4-H	1	Future Farmers of America	1
Junior Achievement	1	Future Business Leaders of America	1
Economic Development	1	Local Sports Teams	1

Stretching services across 17,000 square miles is an impossible task but I sympathized with the parent who focused his/her responses to each question on the lack of local options for the youth in his/her community. This parent resides in one of four counties in the region that do not have direct access to a workforce agency. The school districts in these areas do not have the capacity to develop local initiatives due to limited employers and organizations to pool resources

within their district. Parents in these counties and the remote areas of the other six counties are forced to travel to gain access to resources for their children and most do not have the time or cannot afford to commit to transporting their children to the events and activities sponsored through workforce collaborations. Addressing the lack of stakeholder involvement is well beyond the scope of the current study however until all voices are included we will not have a clear picture of stakeholders across the region.

What constitutes a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado

Three questions - four, seven, and eight - in the primary survey were designed to elicit responses that would describe what constitutes a youth professional development initiative in the region. The fourth question asked respondents to share what organizations or individuals contributed to their professional development and how they contributed. The second part of the question, how the organization or individual helped the respondent, was designed to tap into this guiding question. Four of the nine respondents described how they were helped, the remaining five did not address the second half of the question. Two respondents reported their employer provided job related training, one respondent said their professional networks within the community provided mentorship, and one respondent described how their grandmother helped them through school and their current employer “took a chance.”

The seventh question presented in the survey directly asked respondents to describe any events or activities surrounding youth professional development they experienced in their community. Analysis showed some agreement across general activities like career fairs and mentoring but three respondents listed specific programs which added to the number of single responses coded for the question. Detailed findings from coding are presented in Table 12.

Although all respondents reported attending events and activities across the region, it is worth noting that one respondent from Washington County reported events outside of his/her community then ended their response with, “There are no specific youth programs available in our rural community or county. To access any youth specific services requires travel to two other counties. There is nothing local.”

Table 12. Codes Developed for Question 7 Please describe any events or activities surrounding youth professional development you have experienced in your community

General Responses	Number of Reports	Single Responses (reported only once)	
Job/Career Fairs	4	▪ Uncover your Boss	▪ Kids at their BEST Leadership Program
Mentoring	4	▪ None	▪ TRAINcation Summer Boot Camp
Courses/Workshops	3	▪ Professional Conference	▪ Internships
Job Shadowing	3	▪ Classroom Presentations	▪ Graduating High School or GED
College Tours	2	▪ Mock Interviews	▪ Smart Girls-Cool Dudes
Industry Tours	2	▪ Yuma Workforce Teen Paint	
Paid Internship/Work Experience	3		

Two respondents listed organizations that funded programs the respondents helped organize. Also worth noting, four of the nine respondents provided details concerning how the activity or event addressed youth professional development needs as illustrated by the following response,

“Fort Morgan Workforce Center implemented a TRAINcation Summer Boot Camp to help children realize the importance of Attendance, Attitude, Accountability and Ambition with tours of manufacturing sites and community college campus. Family

And Community Team conferences organized by Morgan County Interagency Oversight Group to help students and families realize the importance of education and the skills that are taught by attending school on a regular basis.”

The final finding worth noting for this survey question is that seven of the nine respondents listed additional events and activities surrounding youth professional development in other survey questions that were not included in Table 12. This additional data will be presented in the final section of this chapter.

The last question of the primary survey, question eight, was designed to elicit responses to describe what constitutes a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado by asking respondents how they thought youth professional development programming could be improved in their area. There was little agreement found in the responses to this question. Three respondents said more funding is needed and two respondents suggested increasing school and agency staff numbers. The respondent who said there were no events or activities in their area only replied “Have some” to this question. The other codes developed for this question were: increase partnerships, more options, stronger communication between stakeholders, and more specific trade skills training.

Across all three questions designed to address what constitutes a youth professional development initiative in the region, a general theme was found that was best described by a response to question seven as, “...targeted youth projects defined by need and availability of resources.” As an ordinary participant in this study I agree with the general theme and the activities reported by the respondents. However, while working in the region, I experienced a strong emphasis on mentorship. Most of the youth and adults with whom I engage as an educator talk about what they learned from their parents, teachers, and peers via mentoring more than what they learned from workshops or specific programs.

An example of mentorship in the region is a 14 year old male in Morgan County with whom I engaged for over a year. The young man had an amazing work ethic that was developed through his family and his religious faith. The first day I met him I was describing the self-direction and commitment required for online learning when he said to me, “I will show progress in the systems everyday but Friday. That’s the day I meet the outreach requirement for my church.” For the next nine months he showed progress every single day except Fridays. He also worked 20-30 hours each week with his dad as a helper in the family’s construction business. When I tried to offer industry tours or workshop opportunities to this young man his answer was always, “Thanks but on that day my dad and I are working on...” or it was something else for his family or church. This young man and countless other youth in the region working either on the family farm or in the family business gain critical professional development prior to attending a workshop or job fair, a major factor workforce staff consider when “targeting” initiatives in the region.

How do power and trust support or impede youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado

The last question in the primary survey prior to the open comment field was designed to elicit respondents’ perceptions of how power and trust support or impede youth professional development in northeastern Colorado. Question nine read, “Knowing that schools, colleges, employers, and agencies across northeastern Colorado must work together, how do you feel trust plays a role in developing region-wide youth professional development initiatives?” The question gained unique responses across respondents. Five respondents composed very detailed responses describing how trust impeded initiatives while three remained neutral and merely stated that trust was important to successful initiatives. One parent typed question marks into the

textbox indicating he/she either did not understand the question or did not have the experience with agencies to speak to the question.

Three respondents noted “rivalries” or “protectiveness over projects or youth” as catalysts for distrust as illustrated by the following response,

“Trust is the most important role for youth development across a region/area. With all the rivalry in sports and regional events, people thinking one area will "get more", and a sense that someone other than their group will benefit the most, it is difficult at best. I have been on many committees to "rally the groups" to work toward a common goal where everyone would benefit, only to have one person or agency collapse the effort due to personal rivalries, issues.”

Three respondents also noted the lack of communication within and across stakeholders generates distrust. One of the three respondents emphasized,

“Without trust and respect for ALL there are no programs as individuals will sabotage any programmatic endeavors. All must be included in the planning stages and then they choose whether or not to participate.”

The statement regarding sabotage caught the attention of both coders and there was a long discussion about adding the term to the general theme for this guiding question. It was agreed that the general theme for this question would be that trust impedes youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado but without further investigation it is too early to tell the level of effect and how power plays a role based on the data provided. When in the field, too often I heard of events weeks or months after they occurred or I referred a youth to a program who was unfortunately turned away because of the school they went to or because their parents had a rivalry with the representative the youth approached.

For example: A young lady elected to enroll in our charter school in order to have the flexibility of online learning so she could meet her duties as regional rodeo queen and work part time. Shortly after enrolling, the chapter leader from Future Farmers of America informed her she could no longer be a member because she could not attend the program’s courses provided

through the local high school. Our organization offered to pay the district for the courses so that the young lady could continue in the nationwide program but the high school merely denied the option and the young lady lost access to a major source of professional development. Two other learners from the same high school were able to continue their participation in the school's athletic programs after transferring to our school. But when all three youth tried to attend a pep-rally for a game that one of them was due to play in they were stopped at the door and told, "You're GOAL students only our students can attend the rally." This example of rivalries between schools also addresses why youth lose trust in organizations and refuse to take part in region wide initiatives. However there is proof that trust can be gained. When I contacted the young lady mentioned in this section, to ensure her willingness to have her story heard, she did not hesitate to agree and was thankful I thought to share her experience. She felt comfortable enough to provide guidance and feedback, even redirected me when my first iteration did not include Future Farmers of America but another major youth organization in the region. So although there are signs of trust impeding regional initiatives, trust is still a major source of support at more localized levels.

Additional Findings from Surveys

Seven of the nine respondents provided additional data that was tied to either question one or question two for the study but entered the data into a survey question that was not designed to address the guiding question the respondent was describing. I decided to separate the additional data to ensure clarity and transparency. It is important to note that we found no direct statements of power and trust to add to the data reported for the third guiding question.

Descriptions of what constitutes youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado

Question 10 of the primary survey asked if the respondents had any additional information to share regarding professional development opportunities in their area. Five of nine respondents typed “No” or “Not at this time.” One respondent thanked us for doing the study. There were only three respondents who provided additional data that addressed the first guiding question of the study. The three responses in the open comment field that addressed what constitutes a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado discussed what could improve initiatives in the region. One respondent noted, “We have so many youth in the area that would benefit from having organized professional development opportunities in this area. However, having well defined opportunities that utilize the resources to promote this growth is greatly lacking.” Another respondent said there is not enough funding, and the final comment entered into question 10 was, “There are many in our area Lincoln County we just need to coordinate better so everyone knows what is available.”

Additional findings that addressed the first guiding question - what constitutes a youth professional development initiative in the region - were found during coding questions three and nine of the survey. It was agreed that the majority of the comments entered in these two questions were tied directly to question seven, “Please describe any events or activities surrounding youth professional development you have experienced in your community” and stemmed from the respondent’s descriptions of their role(s) in youth professional development in question three. Four respondents provided very detailed responses surrounding their current job duties that did not add codes to the findings presented in the section for guiding question one, but would have increased the counts presented in Table 9 and emphasized a focus on mentoring

youth through one on one engagement activities. Only one response to question nine (the power and trust question) produced a statement that both coders felt was a strong example of what does not constitute a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado, “Our youth cannot very well drive 75 miles round-trip to seek assistance and the internet is not the answer for all youth. A webpage cannot provide human interaction.” It is important to note that this was the most direct and descriptive statement regarding access to services we found across the data set.

Descriptions of the stakeholders involved in youth professional development in northeastern Colorado

Six of the 10 questions in the survey were designed to describe the stakeholders involved in youth professional development programming in the region. Across the six questions we found agencies, programs, and individuals mentioned in responses that we did not include in the data presented to capture the active stakeholders in Table 11. For example, the Interagency Oversight Group included as a stakeholder in Table 11 was mentioned a total of six times outside of question designed to capture the agencies involved. This stakeholder is more than just a single group, there are oversight groups scattered across the region whose purpose is to be comprised and facilitated by community representatives that provide workforce development and other agencies information regarding community needs. All but three codes - Junior Achievement, Future Business Leaders of America, and “Many or A Lot” - were found outside of the survey question designed to capture the stakeholders involved in youth professional development initiatives in the region. Finally one respondent listed being a board member on Kids at their BEST when describing their roles in youth professional development, which would have been a unique code for Table 11.

Reframing through Four Assumptions of Social Exchange Theory

Social psychologists Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) found that power and trust operate in Social Exchange Theory using four basic assumptions related to the nature of relationships between individuals and organizations:

- Social exchanges are inter-dependent, the ability to gain profit in a relationship depends on the ability to provide individuals rewards
- Social exchanges are regulated by social norms (reciprocity, justice, and fairness)
- Trust and commitment result from the experiences of individuals before and during the social exchange and help sustain the relationship over time
- The dynamics of interaction and the stability of social exchanges over time are based on the levels of attraction and dependence experienced by the individuals

The limited data set did not allow us to generate well developed themes based on these assumptions. However, addressing the findings from the second round of coding serves to deepen the understanding of where trust is felt between individuals and how it slowly dissolves at the organizational level until it does not exist across the counties in the region.

Although we found evidence corresponding to all four assumptions during the analysis, the majority of the evidence was tied to the first assumption and emphasized the need for resources to provide rewards to individuals in order to have a strong relationship. All respondents reported gaining rewards from individuals and organizations that added to their professional development and noted a lack of available rewards as a barrier to youth professional development initiatives in the region. As an ordinary participant working with families and professionals across the region, I was often confronted with distrust at the organizational level and individual level that stemmed from a lack of rewards and transformed into a sense of

helplessness. Many individuals in my network, including one survey respondent in the region refer to it as the, “we tried and failed syndrome out here.”

The sense of helplessness felt by individuals in the region generates through everyday scenarios such as this: I was working with a group of learners one day when a young lady I had been looking for walked in. At nineteen this young lady was six months pregnant, working full time at a nursing home, and trying to finish off a couple of courses to earn her high school diploma. I had not heard from her in weeks so I was very pleased to see her walk into my site. After separating from the group I asked her how she was doing, she was not in a good place. She and her boyfriend were kicked out of their home and were sleeping in their van in a church parking lot during the winter. The only shelter in town would not take them in because her shift at work did not end until 9p.m. which was beyond the shelter’s curfew policy. She needed help so I grabbed a bottle of water and a granola bar to occupy her while I reached out to my networks. After two hours of reaching out my heart sank as I had to send my learner back out into the cold with a few extra bottles of water and more granola bars, the only rewards I could offer during this social exchange. My learner and I both left the exchange feeling helpless.

In this case, through diligence and persistence I was able to maintain a relationship with the young lady who earned her diploma and plans on continuing her education in the health and wellness industry. But as the first assumption of SET in organizational relations suggests, when an individual does not receive a reward or benefit from an organization trust is in jeopardy. When a professional in an organization feels helpless to provide rewards, there is little to build trust with which touches on the second assumption from Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) that social exchanges are guided by social norms such as reciprocity, justice, and fairness.

I cannot count how many times I picked up my phone or sometimes got in my car and drove many miles in search of resources for a youth who felt helpless, only to discover the youth did not qualify for the resources they needed because of the county they lived in which left me, and at times, other professionals working with the family feeling more helpless than the youth. Although the primary survey was not designed to tap into social norms, specifically, all survey respondents noted activities and events that were specific to their area or in contrast to another community which suggests there are localized social norms across the region. The rivalry theme that developed to describe how power and trust affect initiatives in the region also provided strong evidence that social norms have a major influence at the organizational level generating the “we tried and failed syndrome” at the regional level.

The third assumption of relationships Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) found in Social Exchange Theory says that trust and commitment result from the experiences of individuals before and during the social exchange and help sustain the relationship over time. Four respondents spoke to this assumption. One of the four respondents provided a very clear description,

“Without trust and respect for ALL there are no programs as individuals will sabotage any programmatic en-deavours. All must be included in the planning stages and then they choose whether or not to participate.”

This response was powerful in describing the importance of developing a sense of trust prior to beginning a social exchange in the region. The respondent’s statement suggests they have witnessed programs fail via sabotage because key stakeholders were not included in the development of programs that affected their community.

Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) said the fourth relationship assumption in Social Exchange Theory relates directly to sustaining relationships over time through the levels of attraction and dependence individuals feel. As an educator I focused on my learners' level of attraction to my services and stressed the importance to my learners of not becoming dependent on anyone to guide their learning. But many professionals and agency representatives in northeastern Colorado feel they are forced to rely on their client's level of dependence to the services provided. When an individual feels dependent on another person or agency without being attracted to the quality or quantity of the services provided, a sense of distrust can develop (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). Across all respondents there was an emphasis on rewards, specifically providing more rewards by making region wide initiatives more accessible to potential participants and collaborators. This emphasis suggests the levels of attraction and dependence are out of balance in youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado.

Reframing the data through the lens of Social Exchange Theory via Sabatelli and Shehan's (1993) relationship assumptions allowed us to take a step back after coding the survey questions and re-read each transcript with my notes and communications to better understand the respondents perception of how power and trust influence youth professional development initiatives across the region. The process allowed both coders to make connections between trust and the questions of the survey that were not designed to elicit responses surrounding trust. For example three respondents provided neutral responses to the trust question on the survey but their responses to other questions on the survey noted the need for more rewards and resources to gain "engagement" or "participation" from their clients and community partners suggesting their capacity to earn trust is limited in their current role. Analyzing the data through the lens of Social Exchange Theory suggests there is sense of helplessness by individuals in the area that generates

the “we tried and failed syndrome” at the organizational level which impedes youth professional development initiatives across northeastern Colorado.

Additional Findings from Observations

My observational notes were critical in explaining how cultural rules translate into the themes discovered from the survey data. However, we also discovered unique findings that further illustrate the imbalance of trust and power in the region. Table 7 provides a snapshot of the dataset used for analysis and highlights the some of the findings from my observational notes and communications with community members.

During data collection I remained in contact with graduate committee members, my co-coder, and primary gatekeeper (regional workforce supervisor). I also made contact with 10 members of my professional network and 10 former students in the region. All individuals contacted across the region said they would complete the survey. Eight of the 10 professional contacts requested to be notified when the findings would be available to assist with their community planning. However findings suggest that most of the individuals contacted did not follow through to complete the survey even though they felt the findings would assist them.

Observational data also produced evidence that suggests the leaders charged with initiating and facilitating region wide initiatives are too embedded in their duties and their communities to see how their actions contribute to the breakdown in trust across the region. For example, when a regional leader from the education industry contacted me to let me know they completed the survey, we spent almost two hours talking about the need for regional leaders to work together or local youth will have even fewer opportunities to prepare for the workforce. Within the two hour conversation I counted four times where the educator would talk negatively of an organization or individual from an outside county then counter with, “But those girls at

Sterling Workforce got it together, they started...” The educator did not realize the contradiction in their statements which suggests the educator’s ability to positively contribute to regional initiatives is limited. In a separate email contact with a leader in workforce development I was asked,

“When you said that there was a lack of the description of the barriers to implementing WIOA - is that referring to the guidance itself or how the feds shifts the primary focus of youth to out of school from in-school? Now we basically have to wait until a youth drops out for more than 30 days to provide full WIOA services....pain in the rear!”

This workforce professional is a strong advocate for youth programming in the region and it is understandable they were focused on youth when they contacted me to let me know they had completed the survey. But this individual has known the details of this study since its inception and knew the focus was on cross-community relationships, not program requirements.

The observational data presented in this chapter provided the foundation to the vignettes and explained how cultural rules translate into the themes discovered from the survey data. My observational notes and communications with networks were the source of unique findings that further illustrate an imbalance between trust and power across the networks involved in youth professional development programming in northeastern Colorado.

Summary of Results

Analysis of survey responses and observational data suggest that youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado are not initiatives but scattered “targeted youth projects” that focus on career exploration, professional skills development, and mentorship. Although survey data showed the key stakeholders in youth professional development initiatives

are workforce development and schools, observational data suggests that more research must be conducted to gain the voice of groups not represented in this study. Finally, observational data combined with responses to a direct survey question suggest that power and trust impede the development and success of youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado. The next chapter further discusses the implications of the findings along with limitations and provides recommendations for future efforts in the region.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter extends the discussion of findings in the last chapter along with the implications of the findings. After a brief note from an ordinary participant in the study, the limitations are discussed. The closing section presents recommendations including the option of including appreciative inquiry in future efforts in the region.

Key Findings and Implications

Since inception, this study was designed to assist the workforce development professionals in northeastern Colorado and their networks by providing a description of the professional development opportunities for youth in the region. My aim was to provide agencies and organizations a more holistic description of the programs and stakeholders than economic and unemployment data could provide so they could, in turn, use this information as support in funding requests and address barriers in meeting state and federal workforce development requirements.

The findings from the study provide detail on the available programs and suggest that an imbalance of power and trust impedes the development and success of initiatives across the region. However, due to lack of participation, the study fell short in providing a detailed description of the stakeholders. In addition no region wide initiatives were discovered, critical pieces required by workforce development and their networks to request funding and address reporting and accountability requirements for current programming.

Findings for the first guiding question of the study --what constitutes a youth professional development initiative in northeastern Colorado -- elicited details on individual programs and localized efforts, no region wide initiatives were discovered. Although there was little agreement

regarding what constitutes youth professional development across the nine survey respondents, there was a strong theme surrounding the need for individualized programs that work with youth one on one. In addition to events such as job fairs, workshops, and college or industry tours, respondents reported their greatest success lied in individualized programs like mentoring, job shadowing, and internships.

This key finding for the first question is similar to previous studies in rural communities that developed successful internship or mentoring programs (Arnold, 2015; Brown & Schafft, 2011; Christman, 2012; Handcock & Gile, 2011). Phillip Arnold (2015) used mentoring in a study of rural high school teachers who successfully implemented a ‘bring your own device’ program into a rural Georgia high school. Prior to the study, the school’s administrators struggled for years to implement a technology based curriculum due to the teacher’s aversion to technology. Arnold and his team worked one on one with the teachers for two years via a scaffolded mentoring program that began with the researchers shadowing the teachers and slowly transitioned to online learning modules over the course of the first year. Arnold used interviews, participant journals, and a focus group discussion with seven teachers to learn that faculty members were not initially prepared for the transition to technology in the classroom. The teachers’ first introduction to the ‘bring your own device’ program was via a staff meeting where they were directed to develop curriculums for their content area that allowed students to work via their preferred electronic device. The teachers were immediately overwhelmed but felt powerless against the directive from administration. Because Arnold and his team took the time to work one on one during the initial stages of the study, the teachers developed a sense of trust and became more open to change.

Implications of the findings for question one include support to take action towards the mentorship program proposed in the region's plan (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016) to address the new requirements set forth by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2015, HR803). However another concern is that regional workforce leaders are not able to show evidence that they can successfully implement a region wide initiative, a fundamental expectation of the recent legislation.

Findings from the survey data regarding the second guiding question -- who are the stakeholders involved in youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado -- showed a strong presence of workforce development and schools working with employers, organizations, and other agencies to develop and sustain programs that assist youth in preparing for the workforce. However responses from two survey participants combined with my observations and communications with community members provide evidence that several key stakeholders, not represented in this study, are underrepresented regional decisions made regarding the design and placement of programs. The low participation rate in this study and no representation from four of the 10 counties shows a lack of stakeholder inclusion in regional initiatives. One parent, who lives in one of four counties that does not maintain an American Job Center, focused every response to the survey on the lack of youth programming of any kind in their community. Another respondent who self-described as a workforce development professional wrote,

“Without trust and respect for ALL there are no programs as individuals will sabotage any programmatic endeavors. All must be included in the planning stages and then they choose whether or not to participate.”

This response shows that workforce development professionals are aware of the exclusion of stakeholders in regional decisions. It also suggests this respondent has experienced exclusion within their own industry.

Research surrounding initiatives in rural communities indicates that the primary source of low participation in community initiatives stems from lack of support from key stakeholders such as parents, judicial representatives, and social service representatives (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Hunt-Barron et al, 2015; Millmore, 2015; Strange et al, 2012). Without representation from all stakeholders it is difficult to ascertain who the key stakeholders are in the region. The primary implication of this key finding from the study is that workforce development professionals are required to collaborate with all community stakeholders prior to implementing programs to ensure community participation in all workforce development funded programming. Until steps are taken to overcome the geographic and communication barriers to engage the stakeholders across the region who feel excluded, region wide initiatives will continue to dissolve before they are implemented.

Findings for the final guiding question -- do power and trust support or impede youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado -- show that while trust is built between individuals, competition for limited resources generates rivalries between organizations and communities. These rivalries combined with the geographic distance between stakeholders generate distrust and impedes the development of region wide initiatives. All but one survey respondent agreed that trust is important to successful initiatives and five of the respondents provided detailed responses regarding the lack of trust between organizations and agencies.

Of the three guiding questions developed for the study, this question elicited the longest survey responses and included the most observational data in the findings. The theme that

developed describing the “we tried and failed syndrome out here” was found within the survey, included in a communication with a community member, and was expanded upon in my observational notes.

Rural literature provides several descriptions of the rural sense of community and how that sense of community generates competition for limited resources (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Hunt-Barron et al, 2015; Lambert 2010). It is understandable that residents in northeastern Colorado learned to rely on each other and distrust outsiders. But the sense of community that provides pride and sense of security for residents could negatively affect the local economies in the near future and increase the already large skills gap across the region. The primary implication of the findings for question three is that industry leaders across the 10 counties in northeastern Colorado must work to rebuild trust and expand the individuals’ sense of community to encompass the region.

A Note From an Ordinary Participant

In his 1980 book, *Participant Observation*, James Spradley introduces readers to the concept of ordinary participant, when the researcher has been a part of the population of the study to the point where cultural activities are ordinary to the researcher. At the end of the introduction Spradley cautions,

“...the more you know about a situation as ordinary participant, the more difficult it is to study it as an ethnographer. It is no accident that ethnography was born and developed in the study of non-Western cultures. The less familiar you are with a social situation, the more you are able to see the tacit cultural rules at work” (Spradley, 1980, p61).

I empathize with the wisdom of Spradley’s words after spending the last six years straining my cognitive and emotional capacities through collaboration, design (and re-designing), and reflection. Six years ago I thought it would be easy to study something I pondered for a decade.

But after reflecting to the point of exhaustion I realize that my proximity to the study challenged my responsibility as a researcher to clearly articulate a snapshot of youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado. Without the feedback and guidance I gained from member checking and through my committee it would have been impossible for me to step back far enough to design and disseminate this study.

Instead of providing a clear snapshot of youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado, the findings from this study provide a starting point to discuss how the balance in power and trust earned at individual and local levels can be extended to strengthen region wide initiatives. As an educator I learned how to develop trust in myself and my employers via my work with families and professionals in the region. I often had frustrated parents referred to me who would start the conversation like this, “My friend {so and so} said Cindy’s going to tell you like it is and if she doesn’t know she’ll find out.” I grew to appreciate those comments as compliments. When professionals, parents, and former learners referred parents to me as a trustable resource for their children I knew I was developing and maintaining trust over time. However the trust I built for over a decade was not enough for me to gain a large number of respondents for the survey.

Limitations of the Study

The root of all limitations in this study stems from the low response rate and lack of stakeholder representation in the findings. With nine respondents it was difficult to gain a complete picture of the stakeholders involved or ascertain the strength of the survey questions designed to address the guiding questions of the study. Without additional data it is difficult to say why data for the first two guiding questions was “scattered” across survey questions or why one parent entered only question marks into the trust question. I was taken back when only two

respondents selected multiple roles because most professionals in the region are parents. Was it the language used in the survey questions that directed respondents to compartmentalize to one role or did respondents have difficulty describing their roles within the survey mode, meaning would the engagement level of an interview allow participants to describe their roles without feeling “forced” to select roles via checkboxes?

When designing this study I elected to use surveys instead of interviews to allow for anonymity. However since observational findings showed five of the nine respondents contacted me to let me know they had completed the survey, perhaps future investigation will discover anonymity is not a factor with this population? Why did so few elect to take the time to complete the survey? Perhaps the low response rate due to lack of time or interest in the topic or individuals clicked on the link, reviewed the questions, and did not feel “qualified” or safe enough to respond to the questions and click out of the survey (a count that was not captured via Qualtrics during data collection).

Research in Social Exchange Theory (SET) would say that the time and effort to complete the survey (cost) did not outweigh the benefits (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) would say that the individuals’ lack of trust, either in me or that regional leaders would use the results of this study, diminished the individuals’ ability to see any reward in completing the survey. However observational data suggests that lack of trust was not always the reason for lack of participation in the study. This was the case with a former male student and his mom who contributed two email contacts and three texts contacts to the data in Table 7. The young man contacted me two months into the data collection window with some questions about college. Knowing his mom works with youth across multiple counties in the region, I attempted to recruit both to complete

the survey. I communicated with mom via email twice and with the young man two more times during the next month. Within a week of the survey link closing I learned that they had not completed the survey because they were focused on family events. This evidence suggests that the limited data collection window influenced the participation rate in the study.

Other possible factors that may have impacted the response rate and the helplessness felt by regional residents could be economic and political influences that were not addressed in this study. I addressed how the new guidance from the Department of Labor through WIOA (HR803, 2015) influenced the design of the study, however respondents were not asked how or if the legislation has influenced their capacity to provide support to youth. The six workforce agencies across the region experienced extensive budget cuts that decreased staff levels and limited funding for community programs. I asked respondents to share their professional development needs and all respondents reported needing additional training. Respondents were not asked if they received training from state or federal representatives on the guidelines from WIOA or if they felt confident in their capacity to meet the guidelines. Without further investigation it is difficult to know whether it was the political climate, the topic, the questions, or the mode (survey versus interview) of the study that affected the response rate and limited the findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Sara Hunt-Barron and her colleagues implemented an online professional development program for rural high school teachers in South Carolina then shared their experience in 2015 via an article entitled *Obstacles to Enhancing Professional Development with Digital Tools in Rural Landscapes*. While introducing the complexities of their population the authors ask, “No two rural districts, even within the same region, are the same. How can we offer effective professional development to teachers in these divergent, dispersed areas” (Hunt-Barron et al,

2015, p2)? As an educator and practitioner working to assist youth and their families across 10 counties for over a decade, I feel the same frustrations and ask how agencies and organizations can develop successful youth professional development initiatives across the divergent and dispersed areas of northeastern Colorado?

Research surrounding the rural sense of community shows that rural residents often prefer to rely on their local resources and distrust those who do not live in their community (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Hunt-Barron et al, 2015; Millmore, 2015; Strange et al, 2012). However the residents in northeastern Colorado must pool resources and collaborate to meet state and federal funding requirements (Eastern WIOA Regional Plan, 2016; WIOA, 2015). Therefore discovering how trust is built by professionals in the region and ingraining those approaches into region wide initiatives is critical to developing and sustaining youth professional development programs in northeastern Colorado. The challenge for future studies lies in taking an approach that goes beyond measurement or recruitment strategies and reaches into developing a culture of trust across the divergent and dispersed counties.

Appreciative inquiry has been successful in developing organizational change for decades (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001; Whitney & Trotsen-Bloom, 2003). Through appreciative inquiry researchers are able to discover what works within an organization and build upon strengths instead of focusing on weaknesses. Educators and researchers Diana Whitney and Amanda Trotsen-Bloom define appreciative inquiry as, “the study of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best...In short, Appreciative Inquiry suggests that human organizing and change at its best is a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation” (Whitney and Trotsen-Bloom, 2003, p1). Appreciative Inquiry is more than an approach to a study or developing a catch phrase to

increase production, it is a group initiative driven by a commitment to change. Although not tested with a group as large and dispersed as the communities in northeastern Colorado, appreciative inquiry has increased performance in international organizations and developed a sense of self-empowerment and voice for organization members (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001; Whitney & Trotsen-Bloom, 2003).

Researchers David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney (2001) share how several corporations, including GTE and Avon, used appreciative inquiry as a catalyst to implement positive change within their organizations. Their article describes how GTE implemented an appreciative inquiry initiative that not only increased profit and production but earned national recognition by the American Society for Training and Development within 14 months of inception. The authors also provide step-by-step details of implementing their proven Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle with the Avon Corporation in Mexico to address sexual harassment issues and a glass ceiling at senior management levels. At the core of the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle is working to develop an “affirmative topic choice” that contains specific questions to seek out positive attributes and behaviors in an organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). In the case of the Avon Corporation in Mexico researchers collaborated with all the organization’s members to reframe the negative topic of solving sexual harassment issues into collaboratively developing a model of high quality cross-gender relationships in the workplace.

Appreciative inquiry could build upon the findings of this study by focusing on how professionals working in multiple counties across northeastern Colorado are successful in developing trust with their networks. That information would be passed along to local community leaders to develop initiatives through engagement of their local stakeholders. In

northeastern Colorado the workforce agencies created Interagency Oversight Groups (IOGs) to allow local organizations, employers, and residents the opportunity to collaborate and develop programing specific to their community needs. I recommend utilizing the IOGs to discover what works at the local level and to disseminate a positive shift toward appreciative inquiry via knowledge gained and success stories across the region. Currently the IOGs report to their local workforce agency who shares the reports at agency meetings and across state level workforce list service websites. If the IOGs were able to communicate directly with each other the chances of developing successful initiatives across multiple counties may increase.

Findings from the initiatives in one county would be shared with the other IOGs in the region generating a constant flow of ideas and recommendations that could be used to design successful region wide initiatives. Generating successful modes of sharing of information across stakeholders is critical to appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2001; Whitney and Trotsen-Bloom, 2003) and would be challenging for the stakeholders involved in youth professional development programing across the 10 county region. Limited funding and scattered technical resources have been barriers to collaborative efforts in the past. Having worked online with learners across the region for over a decade I can attest to the lack of stable internet service and individual's access to sources of public internet access. However the advent of secured intranet websites provides an immediate solution to ensure a stable mode of communication among the IOGs. Secured intranet group websites have proven to be strong communication tools for national and international organizations (Horton, et al., 2001; Merono-Cerdan, Soto-Acosta, & López-Nicolás, 2007). Studies have shown that even technology resistant workers gain increased acceptance of engaging in e-communications via group intranets because intranets are less complicated to navigate and resistant users feel safer sharing via private communications

(Horton, et al., 2001; Merono-Cerdan, Soto-Acosta, & López-Nicolás, 2007). A secured group page via LinkedIn, Facebook, or Google would provide IOG members and workforce representatives easy and cost efficient access to share knowledge such as how a professional in their community develops trust across multiple counties in the region. Members could also share videos of local events or watch professional development videos such as how to design a positive topic through appreciative inquiry.

The process for implementing an appreciative inquiry approach into initiatives in the region would also require a strong level of commitment from community leaders to gain buy in from stakeholders in their community and neighboring communities, especially those who feel their voices have not been heard in the past. Utilizing the existing relationships built by the IOGs would ease the process but all workforce representatives and IOG members would have to commit to learning the theory and methods of appreciative inquiry and develop a strong foundation from within prior to expanding the approach into their community networks. Yet through appreciative inquiry community leaders could not only meet state and federal funding requirements to strengthen youth professional development programming, but strengthen trust and balance power levels to ensure sustainability of region wide initiatives.

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APPENDIX A: Methods and Codes Developed During Pilot Study

The design of the pilot included purposeful sampling via a snowball invitation email that contained the purpose of the study and the interview script. Researchers use purposeful sampling to ensure participant attributes and characteristics meet specific requirements (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Glesne, 2011; Lauckner, Paterson, & Krupa, 2012). Purposeful sampling was used in the pilot study to address the delimitations of age, interviewee groups, and geographic locations. The invitation email and script was sent to a total of 19 potential interviewees who were asked to forward the email to other potential interviewees in their network. After three months of recruitment only one interview was conducted with a female workforce development professional.

Once the interview was transcribed, the transcript was inductively coded by two researchers using three guiding questions to generate marginal notes for possible codes and general interpretations. The marginal notes were compared and discussed to provide preliminary inter-rater reliability. The marginal notes along with a clean copy of the transcript were provided to the interviewee to allow her the ability to provide additional interpretations and ensure her voice was captured. Qualitative researchers ask interviewees to review their transcripts and remain active in the research process, termed member checking in the literature, to gain credibility and insight in their work (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Member checking was critical in this study to ensure the researchers' interpretations captured the interviewee's interpretation of the professional development opportunities for youth in northeastern Colorado.

Question	Corresponding Code	Sub Codes
Who are the stakeholders involved in professional development programming in Northeastern Colorado	Description of agencies in the community	Incentives for young adults; Location; Name; Type of agency; Young adult program
	Description of community program	Certifications available; Funding source; Location; Mission/goal; Name
	Description of professionals in the community	Interviewee perception of stakeholder's role; Name; Position/title
	Description of young adults in the community	Ages; Personal Characteristic (determined, work ethic); Socio-economic characteristics (at risk/young parent)
	Description of employers in the community	Industry; Location; Internships; Young adult employment opportunities; Young adult incentives
How do young adults, employers, trainers, and workforce development professionals view their role in professional development programs in Northeastern Colorado	Description of Role	Advocate; Mentor; Referral source
	History/level of professional development	Length of time in current position; Professional; development needed; Type of professional development gained (Formal/Informal); Work history
	Level of engagement with young adults	Amount of Engagement (years, percent of workload) Type of Engagement
What are the perceptions of young adults, employers, trainers, and workforce development professionals regarding the quality of the professional development opportunities for young adults in Northeastern Colorado?	Barriers to successful programs	Distrust; Funding; Stability of young adult; Stability of industry/economy
	Examples of successful programs	Collaborators; Location; Name; Outcomes
	Perception of collaborative effort	Level of community support for programming Level of stakeholder engagement in community (events/meetings) Level of stakeholder engagement in programming Level of stakeholder engagement with young adults
	What generates professional development	Build trust; Collaboration; Determination (individual/organizational); Listen to the young adult; Mentorship; Take baby steps
	What is needed in community	Collaboration; Events focused on young adults; Funding; Internships for young adults; Participation in community forums; Skilled workers; Trust

APPENDIX B: Eastern Workforce Region by County and City/Township

County	Estimated Population (2013)	Cities and Townships	Unemployment Rate ^a	Workforce Center ^c	Natural Resources Employers ^b	Healthcare Employers ^b	Secondary Education Partners ^b	Postsecondary Partners ^b
Cheyenne	1,898	Arapahoe, Cheyenne Wells, Kit Carson, Wild Horse	3.7%	No	7 Oil/Gas Extraction	1 Hospital 1 Mental Health Residential Care	2	**
Elbert	23,713	Agate, Elbert, Elizabeth, Fondis, Kiowa, Matheson, Ponderosa Park, Simla	3.6%	Yes Elizabeth		2 Residential Care	5	2
Kit Carson	8,016	Bethune, Burlington, Flagler, Seibert, Stratton, Vona	2.8%	Yes Burlington	1 Support Activity	2 Hospitals 1 Mental Health 7 Residential Care	5	**
Lincoln	5,431	Arriba, Bovina, Genoa, Hugo, Karval, Limon, Punkin Center	4.3%	Yes Limon	1 Oil/Gas Extraction	5 Residential Care	4	**
Logan	22,407	Atwood, Crook, Fleming, Iliff, Merino, Padroni, Peetz, Proctor, Sterling	3.3%	Yes Sterling	1 Oil/Gas Extraction 5 Support Activities	1 Hospital 3 Mental Health 1 Urgent Care 1 Cancer Center Residential Care	7	1

a-Bureau of Labor Statistics Database, <http://www.bls.gov/data/> retrieved 4/25/15

b-Colorado Department of Labor and Employment-LMI Database, <https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/Default.aspx> retrieved 4/25/15

c-CDLE Workforce Investment Act Annual Report (2014) **Data Unavailable

County	Estimated Population (2013)	Cities and Townships	Unemployment Rate ^a	Workforce Center ^c	Natural Resources Employers ^b	Healthcare Employers ^b	Secondary Education Partners ^b	Postsecondary Partners ^b
Morgan	28,389	Brush, Ft Morgan, Goodrich, Hillrose, Hoyt, Long Lane Village, Orchard, Snyder, Weldona, Wiggins	4.2%	Yes Fort Morgan	1 Oil/Gas Extraction 6 Support Activities	1 Hospital 1 Urgent Care 2 Mental Health 8 Residential Care	6	1
Phillips	4,355	Amherst, Haxtun, Holyoke, Paoli	2.7%	No	1 Product Manufacturing	2 Hospitals 1 Mental Health 4 Residential Care	2	**
Sedgwick	2,354	Julesburg, Ovid, Sedgwick	4.0%	No		1 Hospital 1 Mental Health 2 Residential Care	3	**
Washington	4,774	Akron, Anton, Cope, Last Chance, Lindon, Messex, Otis, Platner, Woodrow	3.0%	No	2 Product Manufacturing	1 Residential Care	5	**
Yuma	10,163	Eckley, Hale, Idalia, Joes, Kirk, Laird, Vernon, Wray, Yuma	3.1%	Yes Yuma	2 Oil/Gas Extraction 1 Product Manufacturing Support Activities	2 Hospitals 2 Mental Health 3 Residential Care	**	**

a-Bureau of Labor Statistics Database, <http://www.bls.gov/data/> retrieved 4/25/15

b-Colorado Department of Labor and Employment-LMI Database, <https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/Default.aspx> retrieved 4/25/15

c-CDLE Workforce Investment Act Annual Report (2014) **Data Unavailable

APPENDIX C: Invitation and Consent

Hello,

My name is Cindy Cindrich and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in Northeastern Colorado. The Principal Investigator is Karen Kaminski from the School of Education and I am a Co-Principal Investigator along with Tobin Lopes from the School of Education. I am contacting you because either you or your 14-17-year-old child is/are associated with or has accessed programs in your area that help youth get jobs and provide professional development. Our goal is to describe the organizations, businesses, or agencies that provide professional development opportunities for youth in Northeastern Colorado, and we are asking for your valuable feedback.

While there is no direct benefit to you, I hope to learn about the professional development options for youth in northeastern Colorado by learning about your experience with agencies and individuals in your area. I am also interested in your career path and professional development goals. Recent federal legislation requires communities to collaborate together in order to receive funding for their local programs. This study hopes to provide agencies and organizations a snapshot of the events and programs for youth in the region. The purpose of this study is to describe the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado by interpreting open-ended surveys from youth aged 14-17 who have accessed programs in your area, workforce development professionals, and adult (18+years) community respondents across 10 counties in Northeastern Colorado.

For this study, I would like you to complete a survey that will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time. You will be presented 10 items, two that provide descriptions you will select and eight that are open-ended (participants will type a response). Your responses will not be linked to your name or personal identifiers.

If you would prefer to provide this information via an interview completed over the phone or online with Skype or Google Hangout, please contact me, and I will work to accommodate your schedule. Data from participants who are interviewed will be kept confidential and will not be linked to names, but will be labeled (example: learner1, educator2, employer3, or parent4).

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential (but unknown) risks. Your participation in this research is voluntary; you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board at RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu or (970) 491-1533.

Attached please find two consent forms with more information about this study.

Adult Participants:

- If you would like to complete the online survey, please continue on to the survey here, and consent by clicking here:
https://chhscolostate.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1CaLBoweijt4BxP
- *If you would prefer to answer the survey questions via a phone or online interview (Skype or Google Handout), please reply to this email and attach the Interview consent*

form that is signed by you. We will follow-up with you to arrange a time for the interview.

Participants 14-17 years old:

- We request that you obtain your parent's permission to participate.
 - If you wish to complete the online survey, please reply to this email and attach the survey consent form that is signed by you and your parent. Once we have received this form, the online youth survey link will be sent to you via email.
 - If you prefer to answer the survey questions via a phone or online interview (Skype or Google Handout), please reply to this email and attach the Interview consent form that is signed by you and your parent. We will follow-up with you to arrange a time for the interview.

Thank you for your consideration.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

Cindy Cindrich, MEd
Colorado State University
or
Karen Kaminski, PhD
Colorado State University

APPENDIX D: Primary Online Survey

{Presented at once in single window to allow scrolling/review prior to survey submission}

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Below are 10 items, the first two items provide descriptions you select from and the other seven are open-ended (require you to type a response). Your personal information will be kept confidential. Any reported or published data will use a group label (example: learner1, educator2, employer3, or parent4).

If you know of a youth (age 14-17) who would be willing to contribute to this study, we need to gain permission from their parent or guardian. Please feel free to share this information and have parent/guardian contact:

Cindy Cindrich,

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

Cindy Cindrich, MEd
Colorado State University

Karen Kaminski, PhD
Colorado State University

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you may withdraw your consent and stop participation (close window) at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board at RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu or (970) 491-1533.

1. Which county do you live in?

Cheyenne
Elbert
Fort Morgan
Kit Carson
Limon

Logan
Phillips
Sedgwick
Washington
Yuma

2. Which of these roles describes you? (Select all that apply)

Agency State/Federal Representative
Court/Judicial Representative
Economic Development
Educator
Employer
Parent
Law Enforcement Representative

Learner/Student
Nonprofit Organization Representative
Social Services Representative
Workforce Development
Youth (18-24)
None of these describe me

3. Based on the role(s) you selected above, please describe how you play a part in youth professional development programming in your area.

4. Please share what organizations or individuals contributed to your own professional development and how they helped you.
5. What are your professional development needs?
6. What agencies or organizations are involved in youth professional development in your area?
7. Please describe any events or activities surrounding youth professional development you have experienced in your community.
8. How do you think youth professional development programming could be improved in your community?
9. Knowing that schools, colleges, employers, and agencies across northeastern Colorado must work together, please describe how you think trust plays a role in developing region-wide youth professional development initiatives.
10. Do you have any additional information to share regarding the professional development opportunities for youth in your area?

APPENDIX E: Youth Online Survey

{Presented at once in single window to allow scrolling/review prior to survey submission}

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Below are 7 items that require you respond. Your personal information will be kept confidential. Any reported or published information will use a group label (example: youth1, youth2, youth3).

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

Cindy Cindrich, MEd

Colorado State University

Karen Kaminski, PhD

Colorado State University

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you may withdraw your consent and stop participation (close window) at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board at RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu or (970) 491-1533.

1. Which county do you live in?

Cheyenne

Elbert

Kit Carson

Lincoln

Logan

Morgan

Phillips

Sedgwick

Washington

Yuma

2. What school do you attend?

3. Who would you talk to about getting a job? If you provide multiple contacts, please state who you would go to first and why.

4. Please describe any work experience you have including paid jobs, volunteer service, and helping out family and friends.

5. Please describe any experience you have with programs that help you get a job such as resume building workshops, mock interview circles, or internships.

6. If you have experience with employment programs in your local area, please describe how the program was helpful to you or how it could be improved.

7. What do you think you need to learn to be successful in your future?

APPENDIX F: Adult Interview Consent Signature Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY:

The phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Karen Kaminski, PhD, School of Education,

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

Cindy Cindrich, MeD, School of Education

Tobin Lopes, PhD, School of Education,

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

We want to learn about your experience with programs in your area that help youth get jobs and provide professional development. We would like to know about the organizations, businesses, or agencies that provide professional development opportunities for youth in Northeastern Colorado.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

Cindy Cindrich, co-principal investigator, is conducting the study to inform her dissertation. Karen Kaminski is advisor to Ms. Cindrich

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to describe the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado. The term “phenomena” is used to describe individual characteristics like motivation and trust along with community characteristics like available resources, agencies, and organizations. These phenomena will be described using the responses to surveys and interviews with youth along with workforce development professionals and their community networks.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place across 10 counties: Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma. Interviews will be conducted and the survey link will remain active for a period of three months, October through January. Interviews will be scheduled for approximately one hour. If you elect to review the transcript of your interview, the review should take approximately one hour in addition to the time taken for the interview.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

Based on your preference you have elected to be interviewed. We will schedule an interview place and time that meets your schedule. Based on your preference the interview will take place via phone or online (video chat). The interview will take approximately one hour. You will be asked nine questions, two that will require you to select from lists and seven that are open-ended (require you to develop a response). Your interview will be transcribed and we will provide you a copy of your transcript to allow you the opportunity to review and make sure we have captured your opinions and experiences properly.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you are under the age of 14 you should not take part in this study. Also if you do not work or reside within the 10 counties listed above you should not take part in this study

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks or discomforts in taking part in this study. However, it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There may be no direct benefit to you, but you may benefit from a focused discussion about your own level of professional development. The overall the benefits lie in providing agencies and individuals a snapshot of the professional development opportunities available for young adults in your community.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?

There is no cost to participate in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent required by law. For this study all audio or video recordings will be transcribed into written format and combined with survey responses for analysis. The audio/video files will be stored on a password protected external storage device for a period of at least three years before they will be permanently erased. We will assign a code to your transcript (Youth1, Employer1, Volunteer1, etc.) so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on this form and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Karen Kaminski at. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu ; 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Your signature on the next page acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff

Obtain your parent's permission ONLY if you are under 18 years of age.

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian I authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to me by _____ and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

APPENDIX G: Parental Informed Consent Signature Form

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The study will take place across 10 counties: Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma. Interviews will be conducted and the survey link will remain active for a period of three months, October through January. The online survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

Based on your preference you have elected to complete an online survey. Once we have reviewed and signed this form, the online youth survey link will be sent to you via email. When you click on the link you will be directed to a secured website where you will be asked to complete a total of seven items, one asking you to select which county you live in and the other six are open-ended (meaning you have to type a response).

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If you are under the age of 14 you should not take part in this study. Also if you do not work or reside within the 10 counties listed above you should not take part in this study

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

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Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?

There is no cost to participate in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent required by law. The only place your name will appear in our records is on this form which will be stored for a period of at least three years before it will be destroyed. The online youth survey contains no information about your identity and will not be linked to this form in any way. Only the research team will have access to this form and the data collected from the online surveys. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials and any specific statements presented will be assigned a general identifier (such as Youth1, Employer2, Parent3, etc.) We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

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Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff

Obtain your parent's permission ONLY if you are under 18 years of age

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian I authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to me by _____ and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

APPENDIX H: Interview Scripts

Script for the phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in NECO

SAY: Hello _____, thank you again for taking time to talk with me today. First we need to read through the consent form I mailed you and answer any questions you may have before we begin the interview.

RESEARCHER ACTION: ensure parent is present if interviewee is 14-17 years old and encouraged parent to remain for the entire interview. Review signed consent form, address any questions, and ensure recording/technology is functioning properly before beginning questions. NOTE if interviewing a youth, skip questions below and go to question #11 on page 3.

SAY: We will now begin the interview questions, please let me know if any of my questions are unclear or need repeating.

RESEARCHER ACTION: for adults use the following items in order as much as possible. Rely on expanded dialogue included for each item but do not hesitate to allow interviewee to direct the flow as long as they remain on topic and do not extend beyond the agreed hour time limit.

1. Which county do you live in? (Circle)

Cheyenne
Elbert
Fort Morgan
Kit Carson
Limon

Logan
Phillips
Sedgwick
Washington
Yuma

2. I am going to read a list of roles to you, please let me know if the role describes you

Agency State/Federal Representative
Court/Judicial Representative
Economic Development
Educator
Employer
Parent
Law Enforcement Representative

Learner/Student
Nonprofit Organization Representative
Social Services Representative
Workforce Development
Youth (18-24)
None of these describe me

3. Based on the role(s) you selected above, please describe how you play a part in youth professional development programming in your area.

*You can have multiple roles that influence youth but which one(s) do you feel affect their professional development the most?

*If a parent, how do they feel their role as parent influences their professional role with youth?

*If a youth ask if they have influenced/directed other youth based on their own experience.

4. Please share what organizations or individuals contributed to your own professional development and how they helped you.

*Were there family/friends who referred you to professionals based on their own experience?

*If you learned “what not to do” from individuals or organizations please describe that experience.

5. What are your professional development needs?

*Does your employer provide professional development opportunities? Were they helpful?

*Where would you go to have your needs met?

6. What agencies or organizations are involved in youth professional development in your area?

*If interviewee struggles, move on to next item & extensions

7. Please describe any events or activities surrounding youth professional development you have experienced in your community.

*Perhaps you went to a county fair or other outdoor event and saw an organization, college or military recruiter working an exhibition booth?

*Have your children, grandchildren, nieces, or nephews taken part in activities or programs that prepare them for the workforce?

8. How do you think youth professional development programming could be improved in your community?

*If funding is presented, ask where should the funding come from (state, federal, etc)?

*How would you go about finding resources & volunteers?

9. Knowing that schools, colleges, employers, and agencies across northeastern Colorado must work together, please describe how you think trust plays a role in developing region-wide youth professional development initiatives.

*Do you feel the youth trust the organizations?

*Do you feel professionals trust the youth they work with? (Examples/Events if possible)

*Do you feel parents trust the professionals they rely on to guide their children?

10. Do you have any additional information to share regarding the professional development opportunities for youth in your area?

START OF YOUTH SCRIPT

RESEARCHER ACTION: for adult interviewees, turn to page 5 for closing remarks. For youth use the following items in order as much as possible. Rely on expanded dialogue included for each item but do not hesitate to allow interviewee to direct the flow as long as they remain on topic and do not extend beyond the agreed hour time limit.

SAY: We will now begin the interview questions, please let me know if any of my questions are unclear or need repeating.

11. Which county do you live in? (Circle)

Cheyenne
Elbert
Kit Carson
Lincoln
Logan
Morgan
Phillips
Sedgwick
Washington
Yuma

12. What school do you attend?

*If in concurrent enrollment (high school & college at the same time) note both

13. Who would you talk to about getting a job? If you provide multiple contacts, please state who you would go to first and why.

*Would you ask family first, if so who? Why them first?

*Did a family member or friend refer you to this person/organization?

*Has anyone talked to you about how to get a job?

14. Please describe any work experience you have including paid jobs, volunteer service, and helping out family and friends.

*If youth struggles with this item, list N/A and move on

15. Please describe any experience you have with programs that help you get a job such as resume building workshops, mock interview circles, or internships.

*Be sure to get details (when where who, etc)

*Has anyone come to your school to talk to you about how to get a job?

16. If you have experience with employment programs in your local area, please describe how the program was helpful to you or how it could be improved.

*If youth struggles with this item, list N/A and move on

17. What do you think you need to learn to be successful in your future?

*Do you need to learn how to be a responsible worker (take care of bills, personal schedules, etc)

*Do you need to learn about careers in order to make your career decisions?

*Do you need to learn more about the industry/career you are currently interested in?

SAY: Thank you {Insert Name} for taking the time to talk with me. I will have a transcript of this interview ready for your review by {Provide one week}.

RESEARCHER ACTION: Confirm interviewee preference for receipt of transcript with recording on (mail, email, but do not fax to public or work number). Address any last minutes questions, thank interviewee again, review/refine notes, and complete journal entry.

APPENDIX I: Research Integrity and Compliance Certificate

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: October 13, 2016
TO: Kaminski, Karen, School of Education
Cindrich, Cindy, School of Education, Gloeckner, Gene, Lopes, Tobin, School of Education
FROM: Swiss, Evelyn, CSU IRB 2
PROTOCOL TITLE: The phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado
FUNDING SOURCE: NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 16-6753HH
APPROVAL PERIOD: Approval Date: October 11, 2016 Expiration Date: September 09, 2017

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: The phenomena driving youth professional development initiatives in northeastern Colorado. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

Important Reminder: If you will consent your participants with a signed consent document, it is your responsibility to use the consent form that has been finalized and uploaded into the consent section of eProtocol by the IRB coordinators. Failure to use the finalized consent form available to you in eProtocol is a reportable protocol violation.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (970) 491-1553; RICRO_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu

Evelyn Swiss, Senior IRB Coordinator

Tammy Felton-Noyle, Assistant IRB Coordinator



Swiss, Evelyn

Approval is to recruit up to 200 (20 youth; 20 adult interviews; 160 adult surveys) participants with the approved recruitment and consent. The above-referenced project was approved by the Institutional Review Board with the condition that the attached consent form is signed by the subjects

Subjects under the age of 18 years old must obtain parental permission.

Approval Period:	October 11, 2016 through September 09, 2017
Review Type:	EXPEDITED
IRB Number:	00000202