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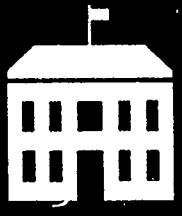
ABSTRACT

The Council for Unity began in 1975 in response to repeated incidents of interracial violence in a New York City high school. The program's primary goal has been to promote intergroup awareness, sensitivity, and cooperation among groups from diverse ethnic, racial, and religious groups and to reduce bias. The program currently operates in 15 high schools and 19 elementary and midlevel schools. The evaluation in 1993-94 focused on the high schools, relying largely on survey data from 12 faculty advisers, 91 students, 22 alumni, 10 principals, and 15 teachers. Most survey respondents were very positive about the program. Students and alumni perceive program experiences to be valuable, and teachers agree. Administrators are concerned about ways to reach greater numbers of students. Respondents offered several suggestions for program improvement and outreach activities, including more networking among the school chapters involved and greater administrative support. Seven tables present evaluation findings. (Contains 5 references.) (SLD)



OER Report

COUNCIL FOR UNITY, INC.
1993-94

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council for Unity began in 1975 in response to repeated incidents of interracial violence among students at John Dewey High School. The program's primary goal has been to promote intergroup awareness, sensitivity, and cooperation among individuals and groups of students from the city's diverse ethnic, racial, and religious groups, and to reduce bias.

The program is sponsored by the Board of Education's Division of High Schools. It currently operates chapters in 15 New York City high schools, in four high school superintendencies. In the past few years, Council chapters have been established in 19 New York City elementary and middle-level schools, as well. The Council for Unity requires that any high school's chapter be formally offered and conducted as a class, with 20 percent of a teaching line allocated to the Council program in that school.

The Division of High Schools requested that the Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.) evaluate the program operating in high schools. The evaluation was intended to provide information on the impact of the program on students and staff directly involved in the program, as well as information on the role the program plays in the larger school community beyond the program participants. Because of staffing limitations, the evaluation relied largely on survey data. The primary data source consisted of a series of surveys sent to participating schools. Distinct surveys were addressed to chapter faculty advisors, (student) chapter members, alumni, principals of host schools, and a small sample of teachers at host schools who were themselves uninvolved in the program. High response rates from the principals, chapter faculty advisors, uninvolved teachers, and student chapter members could be construed to reflect their interest in the program, appreciation of its operation, and concern for its continuation.

Faculty advisors reported that typically, 33 students were members of their chapters and that an average of 21 members developed and implemented Council activities. In addition to chapter members, the broader high school community participated in chapter activities in 1993-94--including students who were not chapter members, parents, other family members, other school staff, local business people, and a variety of other individuals. Beyond the people who participated in Council activities, even greater numbers of the school community were served by the Council's activities. The advisors estimated that between 15 and 3500 students were served by their chapters' program events during 1993-94. In addition, school staff, parents, other family members, and community members were reported to have been served by chapter activities.

Across the range of groups, most respondents reported that the Council had changed the lives of students at their schools. All of the responding chapter faculty advisors, all of the principals and all of the uninvolved teachers reported that the program had made a difference in students' lives. Most of the student chapter members also reported that the program had made a difference in their lives. Most students reported that the Council had helped them in four specific target areas of the program. The majority of the students indicated that their work in the Council had made them "feel more comfortable speaking in front of" groups, had given them "a voice about injustice and bigotry," had helped them to "persuade [their] friends to recognize and to go beyond bigotry," and had "helped [them] to deal with prejudice by talking, rather than acting, after racial incidents." Half of the students reported that their Council participation had eased their interactions with people outside of school--friends, families, other people in their neighborhoods.

Students reported that the most important thing they had gained from their work in the Council was an increased understanding of people from other groups. They reported learning about other groups of people, coming to understand the things they have in common with people from other groups, and recognizing that everyone deserves respect. Students also frequently indicated that they valued learning ways to deal with conflict.

Virtually all of the alumni respondents replied that the program had "made a difference in [their lives] while in high school." In addition, most stated that the program had "made a difference" in their lives after high school. Commonly, the alumni noted that the Council had helped them to understand and respect cultures and religions other than their own. Their work in the program also gave them a sense of efficacy, and made them more open-minded and trusting of other people.

The program elements most frequently cited by students as helpful were the development of communication skills and other personal development, such as becoming more patient, open-minded, or self-disciplined. Students also appreciated learning about the backgrounds of other people (e.g., learning how much they share with people from other backgrounds) and making new friends. For the alumni, "the most rewarding aspects of [their] participation in the Council for Unity," were the experience of efficacy or competence-building and the friendships they had established.

Four-fifths of the students, faculty advisors, and uninvolved teachers reported that their schools had "changed as a result of the operation of [their] Council chapter[s]." Seven of the ten principals gave the same response.

In their ratings of the effectiveness of the program's principal components, respondents from the different groups rated the program's efforts to enhance self-esteem most highly, followed by its multicultural events and group dynamics program. The performing arts and peer mediation components were rated as the least effective program components.

While the numbers of students actively involved in the program are relatively small, given the overall enrollments of the high schools, the program is perceived to be a valuable asset. There was considerable agreement among the survey respondents regarding the need to expand the program to reach more students within the participating high schools--in greater numbers and in the ethnic diversity, academic level, and level of involvement in the school community (e.g., alienated, engaged) represented within the currently participating schools. For the program administrators, though, a dilemma seems to be how to expand the program without sacrificing one of the program's primary elements, its intimate, family atmosphere.

Most survey respondents were very positive in their evaluation of the program. Still, respondents offered several suggestions for its improvement. Based upon the findings of this evaluation, O.E.R. offered the following recommendations within the recognized constraints of the budget:

- Further develop the Council's program--expand the specific content areas the program addresses (e.g., gender-related issues including sexual harassment, date rape, sex education; tolerance for gays and lesbians; environmental concerns) and deepen the program's coverage of that content (e.g., helping students to accept more responsibility and to better deal with the consequences of their actions and decisions; improve the group dynamics and peer mediation programs).

- To reach a wider range of students, expand the program offered within participating schools. It was suggested that the Council class be offered for more than one class period daily.

- Further develop the administrative and programmatic resources available to the chapter staff. This could be accomplished by allocating more Council headquarters' staff time to direct chapter guidance, and/or more effectively utilizing resources beyond the current Council staff (e.g., the expertise of a citywide network of community-based organizations).

- Consider ongoing outreach to and networking among individual chapters and the program's headquarters staff with community-based organizations (CBOs). Many CBOs, in communities across the city, have long

histories of working in a spirit of inclusion and working to promote healthy, diverse communities (e.g., settlement houses). Many provide outreach services beyond their immediate communities. In addition to traditions of community service and improvement, many CBOs can boast exceptionally capable and dedicated staffs. The organizations and staffs might serve as resources to the program and the individual chapters (e.g., guidance in program development and administrative systems), and as possible venues for chapter members' community service work. The interaction could potentially strengthen the larger communities and the schools' relationships with their communities. At present, these organizations appear to be untapped resources for many Council chapters.

- Improve the administrative support provided to chapters (e.g., more timely communication of such program-related opportunities as acceptance or rejection for job opportunities and scholarships). Chapter members reported that the costs of major Council events (e.g., induction dinners) prohibited some chapter members and their families from attending. Particularly for those recently developed chapters, the program headquarters needs to offer support (e.g., fundraising expertise) for fuller participation in the events that are so important to the members' program experience. The chapters also would benefit from a headquarters-supported systematic and regular exchange among the more recently established and the longer-established chapters.

- Broaden the geographic base of program-wide activities beyond the program's historic roots in Brooklyn. Conducting events in other boroughs would encourage the participation of members of newer chapters, and would extend at least the environmental range of the program and its members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the program participants, school administrators and staff who provided much of the data presented in this report. They were thoughtful in their review and constructive in the suggestions they offered for program improvement. The program administrators generously shared their planning materials.

Mary Schearer conducted the evaluation and wrote the final report. Our thanks are due also to Sharon McHale for SPSS data analysis.

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BACKGROUND

With increasing frequency, the popular and education presses nationwide have issued reports on violence in schools, inter-ethnic tensions and the critical need for the enhancement of students' self-esteem. These problems seem most apparent in the nation's high schools. In addition to describing the scale of violence in schools (Congress of the U.S., 1992; Toby, 1983) and school impacts of gang activity (Trump, 1993), attention also has been paid to possible remedies--including curricula, workshops for adults, and extracurricular activities (Landen, 1992).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Council for Unity began in 1975, in response to repeated incidents of interracial violence among students at John Dewey High School in Brooklyn, New York. The program's primary goal has been to promote intergroup awareness, sensitivity, and cooperation among individuals and groups of students from the city's diverse ethnic, racial, and religious groups, and to reduce bias. Program literature describes it as "an adventure in citizenship." Beyond promoting harmony, its other goals have been to:

- promote good citizenship by providing opportunities for volunteer community service,
- engage and provide support for entire families,
- promote brotherhood and sisterhood, and
- support program participants in their work toward constructive social change through involvement in a network of community-based organizations and public agencies.

Program literature describes the ultimately transformative function of the program--to redefine the roles of and relationships between students, faculty, and the larger communities surrounding high schools.

Program administrators characterize the Council as "unique," "a culture" or a "movement" which "people join for life." The program strives to engage students from their formal induction into the program during their school years through graduation and adulthood. The Council is proud of the continuing involvement of over 300 alumni. It also works to actively involve the parents and families of chapter members. Council alumni, described by program administrators as "very active," sponsor social and charitable events, and this summer offered job placement in their own work organizations for 100 high school seniors.

A primary objective is to enable students to meet and to come to know students from other backgrounds. In many schools, this involves bringing students from different races, ethnic or religious groups together. In schools with less ethnic or cultural diversity, the objective has been to encourage students across different levels of academic performance to work together. Offering an example of the latter situation, one faculty advisor noted that, "After a while, very bright kids start to help the learning disabled, even ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder] kids... they come to realize that they have similar insecurities."

The executive director described "four pillars" of the program. Building upon these principles, each chapter is free to tailor the rest of its Council program to the specific needs of its school community. The guiding principles of the program are:

- The Council is to be a forum for genuine student empowerment--with students using the faculty advisor as a resource, rather than as a chapter director.
- The Council is to create a family atmosphere, or one of intimacy, respect, and trust among members (e.g., use a group dynamics curriculum to teach students how to build relationships, generally provide emotional support).
- The Council strives to enhance members' self-esteem through skills development. It works to develop confidence with such skills as public speaking.
- The Council also helps students to develop an identity or a "pride of belonging" to the "movement" that is the Council for Unity.

These pillars are reflected in the oath that members take upon induction into the Council. They promise to "strive in word and in deed to promote brotherhood and understanding between all people, and [to] work to improve" their school, community, city, and country. Council members are "not afraid to fail, [and promise] never [to] quit." Although members "may disagree with [their] fellow Council members, [they] will never let them down." Members "further pledge to treat all members as ... brothers and sisters, [and to] extend them ... friendship, comfort them in need and defend them at all times." Members promise to "always seek to resolve," and not create conflict, and to give all other Council members their dedication, friendship, and love.

The program elements used to accomplish its goals are:

- an organizational curriculum--in collegial governance, to help organize events,
- a group dynamics curriculum,
- a multi-cultural curriculum--An inter-disciplinary approach to multi-cultural education (1991),
- other multicultural awareness techniques, including original dramatizations of racial incidents, and
- networking among elementary, middle grade, and high school chapters to provide continuity and ongoing support for members throughout their school careers, and ultimately into program involvement as adults.

The curricula continually are evolving and being adapted to meet the needs of specific school communities. In addition to these formal curricula, the Council program includes National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations- sponsored dinners for chapter members and their families. Recently, parents have established their own Council chapter and in some schools, Council parents run schoolwide activities.

The executive director described the Council's continuity as a feature distinguishing the program from other school clubs. He reported that the continuity is afforded by the formal class scheduling which the Council requires of high schools wishing to host a Council chapter. At a minimum, a high school Council for Unity chapter is a class which formally meets five times each week. During the Council class, students have an opportunity to work together to solve problems, and so, to come out of their isolation. Another key tenet of the program is student accountability--there are explicit requirements for membership.

After completing the work required for membership, under the tutelage of a faculty sponsor and later, a student/chapter member, membership is celebrated with a formal induction ceremony.

Students or chapter members are recruited by teachers, deans, and guidance counselors. Program recruiters are particularly interested in engaging students who are "in trouble." In addition, program organizers seek students from the various ethnic and racial groups represented in the larger school population. They also try to attract students at all levels of academic performance.

The program is sponsored by the Board of Education's Division of High Schools.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Division of High Schools requested that the Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.) evaluate the Council program operating in high schools. The evaluation had two foci--one directed toward the 1993-94 program, and the other examining the experiences of program alumni. The evaluation was intended to provide information on the impact of the program on students and staff directly involved in the program, as well as information on the role the program plays in the larger school community beyond the program participants.

Following orientation meetings with the Division of High Schools and program administrators, an examination of materials relevant to the program, and interviews with other program staff,

O.E.R. began the core data collection in May, 1993 by mailing a series of surveys to schools participating in the program. Distinct surveys were addressed to chapter faculty advisors, (student) chapter members, alumni, principals of host schools, and a small sample of teachers at host schools who were themselves uninvolved in the program. In addition, O.E.R. examined program-developed monthly reporting forms, summarizing the activities and accomplishments of individual chapters.

Interviews with Program Administrators

After orientation meetings with representatives of the Division of High Schools and program administrators, an O.E.R. evaluator formally interviewed the program's executive director in late March. In May, the evaluator interviewed four of the other principal program staff in the program office at John Dewey High School in Brooklyn.

The interviews at Dewey were followed by a visit to the Dewey High School chapter space and to the chapter's "Peace Garden," which had been cited frequently in Council literature. A chapter member escorted the evaluator to these sites and answered her questions about the current activities in those sites. The Council room was full of students who were quite animated, working together, and clearly engaged in their activities. Throughout that visit, the Dewey chapter faculty advisor was meeting with students.

Survey Sampling Strategy

O.E.R. sent surveys to the faculty advisors for each of the 15 high school chapters and to the principals of each of the 15 host high schools. The faculty advisors were asked to distribute a set of surveys to ten participating students*. Each principal was asked to distribute surveys to two teachers uninvolved in the program. Ten students represented between 15 percent (Tottenville High School) and 100 percent (Sheepshead Bay High School) of the students participating in the Council program at the schools returning the survey. In addition, O.E.R. mailed surveys to half of the 330 alumni included on a mailing list supplied by the program administrators.

Survey Samples

Students, staff, and school administrators currently involved with the program returned surveys. The sample characteristics are summarized in Table 1. Eighty percent of the chapter faculty advisors (n=12) completed and returned surveys. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent, n=11) submitted lists of students participating in the program for 1993-94. Each faculty advisor was asked to distribute surveys to ten participating students. Ninety-one students, from 14 of the 15 New York City Council high school chapters returned surveys (61 percent). Eight Council chapters returned eight or more surveys from students. Nearly two-thirds of the chapter members who returned

* O.E.R. requested that the students sampled include female and male students, members of the chapter's executive board, members from different grade levels and levels of academic performance.

Table 1

Survey Sample Characteristics[a]

Superintendencies /Schools	Alumnae/ Alumni	Faculty Advisors	Principals	Students	Uninvolved Teachers
BASIS					
Fort Hamilton	2	1	1	10	2
John Jay	—	—	1	—	2
Lafayette	—	1	—	8	1
Tottenville	—	1	1	9	2
Brooklyn					
Canarsie	—	1	1	10	—
John Dewey	18	1	1	10	—
Erasmus Hall	—	—	—	2	—
Midwood	1	—	—	2	—
Edward R. Murrow	1	1	1	9	1
Sheepshead Bay	—	1	1	8	—
South Shore	—	1	1	10	2
Manhattan					
M.Luther King, Jr.	—	1	1	2	1
Bayard Rustin High School/Humanities	—	1	—	2	—
Queens					
Hillcrest	—	1	—	5	2
Newtown	—	1	1	4	2
TOTALS[b]	22 (15%)	12 (80%)	10 (67%)	91 (61%)	15 (50%)

[a]Numbers of survey respondents in each group of staff, students, etc..

[b]Total number of survey respondents in each group and the response rate within that group of respondents.

- In most cases, the absolute number of respondents within each group is small. Yet, the response rates are equal to or notably higher than those which might have been expected for survey research.

surveys were in either the eleventh (35.2 percent, n=32) or twelfth grades (29.7 percent, n=27). Students reported that, on average, they had participated in the Council for three school terms (M=2.9 terms, median=2.0). Very few of the chapter members responding to the survey had been involved with the program before they entered high school (4 percent, n=4).

The principals of ten of the participating high schools (67 percent), or their designees, returned surveys describing their perceptions of the program as operated in their schools. Representing eight participating high schools, 15 faculty members formally uninvolved in the program (50 percent) returned surveys. The high response rates can be construed to reflect interest in the program, appreciation of its operation, and concern for its continuation.

O.E.R. mailed a survey and return envelopes to 166 program alumni, randomly selected from a list submitted by the Council staff. This provided a 50 percent random sample of individuals included on the program's current mailing list. Over the summer, 15 were returned by the Postal Service as undeliverable. These potential respondents were not replaced. Three people included on the program's alumni mailing list, yet who were not alumni of the Council's New York City high school program, also returned surveys. Their responses were not included in this summary. Twenty-two alumni of the New York City high school-level Council program returned surveys (15 percent of the 148 surveys delivered to high school program alumni). They were graduates of four New

York City high schools (viz., John Dewey High School, Fort Hamilton High School, Midwood High School, Edward R. Murrow High School). Predictably, most of the alumni responding to the survey were alumni of the oldest Council chapter, that operating for 19 years at John Dewey High School (82 percent, n=18).

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

Chapter II presents information related to the implementation of the 1993-94 program and the experience of program alumni and summarizes the findings. Chapter III offers conclusions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

SITES

The program currently operates in 15 New York City high schools, in four high school superintendencies. In addition, a Council chapter opened in a Kirkwood, Missouri high school during 1993-94. In the past few years, Council chapters have been established in 19 New York City elementary and middle-level schools, as well. The participating New York City high schools and their superintendencies are:

BASIS	Fort Hamilton High School John Jay High School Lafayette High School Tottenville High School
Brooklyn	Canarsie High School John Dewey High School Erasmus Hall High School Midwood High School Edward R. Murrow High School Sheepshead Bay High School South Shore High School
Manhattan	Martin Luther King, Jr. High School Bayard Rustin High School for the Humanities
Queens	Hillcrest High School Newtown High School.

Additional Council chapters were expected to serve John Bowne High School, William E. Grady High School, Jamaica High School, and East New York School of Transit Technology. The Council administrators reported dropping these chapters from the program when they discovered that these schools were not providing the time required to operate the school chapters as originally designed and stipulated in the charter establishing each chapter. The program requires that the chapter be formally

offered and conducted as a class, with 20 percent of a teaching line allocated to the Council program in that school.

PROGRAM GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Perceived Goals of the Program

The principals, faculty advisors, and student chapter members were asked to describe what they saw as the goals of the Council program. There was considerable agreement within and across these groups. The majority of each of the groups identified the promotion of unity or the development of understanding, harmony, and trust among students of different races as a primary program goal. This was the goal most frequently cited by respondents. All of the principals (100 percent, n=10), two-thirds of the student members (67 percent, n=57), and three-fifths of the faculty advisors (58 percent, n=7) cited this as the program's primary goal.

The other program goals mentioned frequently were the development of multicultural awareness and the promotion of student efficacy or leadership skills. These were most often mentioned by faculty advisors.

Table 2 summarizes responses to survey questions assessing the program's effectiveness in meeting the principal program goals. In responses to a series of questions, school staff, administrators, current chapter members, and program alumni indicated that they considered the program quite effective in meeting five goals. The goals examined included promoting multicultural appreciation, promoting racial and religious

Table 2

Perceived Mean Effectiveness in Meeting Program Goals[a]

Program Goals	Alumnae /Alumni (n=22)	Faculty Advisors (n=12)	Principals (n=10)	Students (n=90)	Uninvolved Teachers (n=12-15)
Promoting multicultural appreciation	4.7	4.2	4.2	___[b]	4.0
Promoting racial and religious tolerance	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.2[c]	3.9
Helping students to replace conflict with communication	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.1	3.6
Helping members to become catalysts for positive change in communities	4.1	4.6	4.4	4.0	4.2
Bringing students out of their isolation	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.4

[a]Responses to each question were measured on five-point Likert scales (1=not at all effective/helpful through 5=extremely effective/helpful).

[b]This question was not asked of student chapter members.

[c]This question differed from that asked of other groups of respondents. Students were asked "How much has the Council helped you to understand people of other races and religious groups?"

- An examination of the mean ratings from each of the respondent groups reveals that overall, the program's efforts to meet its unity-related goals were considered to be quite effective.

tolerance, helping students to replace conflict with communication, helping members to become catalysts for po itive change in their communities, and bringing students from different groups out of their isolation.

Council-sponsored Activities

As reported by the chapter faculty advisors, the 12 Council chapters for which data were provided have operated for six school terms (M=6.1, median=2.0). Typically, the chapters operated for eight hours each week (M=8.3, median=5.0). Advisors estimated that participating students typically spent five hours each week on program activities (M=4.6, median=5.0), and that chapter members generally participated in the program for about three and one-half terms (M=3.5, median=2.5). These and other program descriptive data are summarized in Table 3.

Faculty advisors reported that their Council chapters offered 12 activities during 1993-94 (M=11.7, median=13.0)*. The activities they cited included:

- multi-ethnic studies (e.g., group discussions, readir, multicultural literature),
- the creation of murals, posters and bulletin boards stressing togetherness and respect for diversity,
- organizing schoolwide events fostering unity (e.g., Unity Week, Harmony or Peace Days, Black Heritage Days, Latin Culture Days, a multi-ethnic Thanksgiving celebration, a "Notable Women Contest," a talent show featuring rock, rap, poetry, and prose stressing harmony),
- cooperating with other school clubs to produce schoolwide events (e.g., African-American Culture Club on a Martin Luther King, Jr. tribute, South Asian Culture Club on multi-cultural performances and a fashion show),

* A few chapter faculty advisors did not list specific Council-sponsored events. Instead, they described the activities. In those cases, it is likely that our counts have underestimated the program offerings.

Table 3

Program Descriptors for Each Chapter

Superintendency /School	Number of Terms of Operation	Number of 1993-94 Events	Number of Program Hours/Week	Average Student Time Commitment/Week	Number of Chapter Members
BASIS					
Fort Hamilton	8	17	6	3	25
John Jay	—	—	—	—	—
Lafayette	4	17	9	7	18
Tottenville	2	18	42	6	68
Brooklyn					
Canarsie	1	4	5	5	15
John Dewey	38	15	3	5	64
Erasmus Hall	—	—	—	—	—
Midwood	—	—	—	—	—
Edward R. Murrow	8	24	6	8	52
Sheepshead Bay	2	2	5	2	10
South Shore	2	11	2	2	23
Manhattan					
M.Luther King, Jr.	2	3	5	2	43
Bayard Rustin High School/Humanities	1	3	4	3	23
Queens					
Hillcrest	1	2	4	6	14
Newtown	4	24	8	5	36
Overall Program Means	6.1 (n=12)	11.7 (n=12)	8.3 (n=12)	4.6 (n=12)	32.6 (n=12)

- For each program descriptor, there was a wide range of program performance across the chapters. In many, although not in all cases, the more recently-established chapters reported less well-developed program offerings than did the longer-established chapters.

- cultural celebrations of Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year, Ramadan, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Haitian Flag Day,
- self-awareness sessions,
- sensitivity sessions,
- participation in the city's AIDS March,
- participation in the neighborhood's clean-up and beautification events,
- conducting a school environmental survey,
- adopting Hale House as a site for volunteer work,
- articulation activities with other Council chapters (e.g., inter-visitations, luncheons),
- publishing a Council yearbook,
- publishing a magazine of poems, stories, and essays related to unity,
- holiday dinners, family dinners and shows, dinner dances,
- food drives, holiday toy drives, and
- student-faculty basketball and volleyball games, and other fundraising events (e.g., car washes).

In 1993-94, Council members from one school alone were reported to have worked with the Brooklyn AIDS Task Force, a group addressing the needs of terminally-ill children, two hospitals, a senior citizens center, "Stop the Violence" Walk, New York City's Council on the Environment, two television programs, and a broad-based community effort to stop the local siting of a municipal incinerator.

As mentioned previously, in addition to collecting survey response data, O.E.R. also reviewed data collected by program administrators--on a monthly report. Table 4 summarizes data

Table 4

Summary of Program Reporting Form Data for 1993-94

	Number of Months Reported	Mean Number of Program Days (monthly)	Mean Total Monthly Attendance	Mean Daily Attendance	Number of Activities Sponsored[a]	Mean Number of Students on Register
BASIS						
Fort Hamilton	5	18	378	22	4	7
John Jay	2				2	
Lafayette	7	18	258	15	11	7
Tottenville	3	20	363	17	5	34
Brooklyn						
Canarsie	7	15	707	47	11	8
John Dewey	3	13	117	10	2	13
Erasmus Hall	4	20	270	17	7	24
Midwood	7	14	237	15	10	43
Edward R. Murrow	6	18	121	7	10	7
Sheepshead Bay	1	—	—	—	5	—
South Shore						
Manhattan						
M. L. King, Jr.	4	5	322	19	10	17
Bayard Rustin/ Humanities	—	—	—	—	—	—
Queens						
Hillcrest	3				6	13
Newtown	6	16	250	17	14	20
Overall Program Means		16	327	20	31	17

[a]Number of distinct program activities cited.

- For each indicator of program performance, a wide range of program performance was reported. The differences could not be attributed readily to the longevity of chapter operation.

related to Council-sponsored activities, attendance, and formal chapter participation.

Participation in Council Events

Predictably, virtually all survey respondents had participated in some Council events. On the average, principals reported having attended four Council activities (M=3.6, median=3.5). Teachers uninvolved in the program reported having attended two Council-sponsored events (M=1.6, median=1.0). Student chapter members reported having participated in an average of five Council activities this year (M=4.6, median=4.0).

In addition to chapter members, the Council's program has served the broader high school community. When asked whether the Council program at their schools served all students equally as well or whether it served certain students more adequately than other students, most of the faculty advisors (75.0 percent, n=9), principals (60.0 percent, n=6), and teachers uninvolved in the program (60.0 percent, n=9) responding replied that the program served all students equally well. In response to another question, faculty advisors estimated that, in addition to the program participants, 60 students who were not chapter members participated in chapter activities in 1993-94 (M=59.6, median=8.0). The advisors also reported that parents (M=13.9, median=8.0), other family members (M=12.4, median=10.0), other school staff (M=8.4, median=5.0), local business people (M=3.8, median=3.0), and a variety of other individuals (M=13.0, median=6.0) participated in Council activities in 1993-94.

Faculty advisors reported that, in addition to people who participated in Council activities, even greater numbers of the school community were served by the Council's activities. The advisors estimated that between 15 and over 3500 students were served by their chapters' program events during 1993-94 (M=1415.4, median=1025). In addition, school staff (M=27.4, median=5.5), parents (M=24.1, median=8.0), other family members (M=18.7, median=11.5), and community members (32.3, median=10.0) were served by chapter activities.

CHARACTERISTICS AND NUMBERS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Students/Chapter Members

Before estimating the number of members of the broader school community touched by the program, faculty advisors described the formal program participants. Faculty advisors responding to the survey reported that typically, 33 students were members of their chapters (M=32.6, median=24.0)*, and that an average of 21 members developed and implemented Council activities (M=20.8, median=13.0). There were more female chapter members (M=18.8, median=14.0) than males (M=10.9, median=9.5). Chapter members were more often eleventh (M=10.5, median=9.5) and tenth grade students (M=7.2, median=6.0) than ninth (M=6.2, median=4.0) or twelfth graders (M=6.4, median=4.5). The advisors reported that chapter members represented the ethnic diversity seen in the larger school community. Chapter members are

* According to responses to the principals' survey, the Council chapters serve schools with enrollments ranging from 2,735 through 4,700 students.

African-American (M=11.7, median=9.5), Asian (M=3.6, median=2.0), Latino (M=5.7, median=5.0), white (M=9.1, median=5.0), as well as students from other backgrounds (M=8.6, median=4.0)(e.g., students from the Middle East, the former Russian Republics, Pakistan, Guyana, students of mixed parentage).

As might be anticipated, the survey sample of individual student/chapter member respondents differed somewhat from this portrait. Typically, chapter members responding to the survey reported that they had participated in the Council program for three school terms (M=2.9, median=2.0). The "average" chapter member was 16 years of age (M=16.4, median=16.0). Nearly two-thirds of the student survey respondents were girls (74 percent, n=67). The 87 chapter members providing ethnicity data represented the racial diversity for which the Council strives--African-American (36 percent, n=31), Asian (9 percent, n=8), Latino (18 percent, n=16), and white students (18 percent, n=16), as well as students from a variety of other backgrounds (18 percent, n=16). Chapter members reported that they typically spent five hours each week on Council activities (M=5.4, median=5.0).

Different administrators estimated the total number of current Council chapter members to be between 400 and 1000 students. This number includes students formally registered in a Council class as well as students informally participating in Council activities. The 11 high schools submitting class lists for their 1993-94 program cited a total of 323 students, while 12

chapter faculty advisors reported that their chapters had 391 members*. The information from all of these sources suggests a student Council membership of a minimum of approximately 400 with additional students taking part in Council activities on an informal basis.

Paths of introduction to the program. The strongest single influence on program involvement seemed to be a teacher's suggestion. Students most often reported that they became involved in the Council after a teacher or a guidance counselor told them about the program (40 percent, n=36). Eleven students (12 percent) considered the program on the advice of friends. When multiple influences were considered, it appeared that seeing a Council event played a role in the decisions to join the Council by 23 chapter members (25 percent). In these instances, attendance at a Council event was accompanied by the advice of friends, teachers, and guidance counselors.

Students not inducted into the program. In addition to students who were inducted in the program, other students, initially invited to join the chapters, failed to be inducted. Program administrators reported that these students were unable to complete the pre-induction tasks or to demonstrate the positive behavior and attitudes required for induction into the Council.

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* This figure included 35 "affiliates" cited in Tottenville High School in addition to 33 chapter members.

The pre-induction assignments have included attending Council meetings, "maintain[ing] a good grade level," keeping a log of Council-related activities, "helping to plan and implement a brotherhood/sisterhood event for the school ... promoting understanding and cooperation among the different groups in the school," "plan[ning] a human relations activity designed to promote understanding and communication among all Council members," helping "to plan and implement a charitable activity," all while maintaining a positive attitude corresponding with the Council's mission.

Faculty advisors reported that an average of seven students failed to be inducted into their chapters in 1993-94 (M=6.9, median=3.5). The advisors indicated that both male (M=4.1, median=3.0) and female students (M=3.7, median=3.0) were not inducted. This group came from the full range of ethnic groups represented by Council membership--African-Americans (M=2.7, median=2.0), Asians (M=1.6, median=.0), Latinos (M=2.9, median=1.0), whites (M=1.9, median=2.0), and other students (M=0.2, median=.0).

Program Alumni

The alumni who responded to the survey reported that they typically had participated in the program for five years (M=5.1 years, median=3.0 years). Virtually all of the Council alumni responding reported that they had graduated from high school (96 percent, n=21). They left school between 1976 and 1994. More than half of the alumni responding to the survey were males (55

percent, n=12). Their average age was 24 years of age (M=24.0, median=22.0). The 21 graduates who provided ethnic information represented a range of ethnic groups--African-American (19 percent, n=4), Asian (14 percent, n=3), Latino (14 percent, n=3), white (38 percent, n=8), as well as other backgrounds (14 percent, n=3).

Most of the survey respondents reported that they have remained in contact with the Council since leaving high school (86 percent, n=19). Typically, alumni reported two different types of contact with the Council (M=2.1, median=2.0). Most often, this contact consisted of attending Council events (86 percent n=19). Alumni also reporting sending notices of family events (18 percent, n=4), fundraising (18 percent, n=4), serving on the Council's executive board (14 percent, n=3), and mentoring chapter members (14 percent, n=3). Nine alumni reported some other route for continued contact with the Council (41 percent, n=9) (e.g., serving on specific alumni committees).

Chapter Faculty Advisors

All except one of the faculty advisors who returned surveys were teachers (92 percent, n=11). Of the ten advisors who provided this information, six became involved in the program during or since 1993.

While most of the information from faculty advisors came in the form of survey responses, two advisors provided additional information in telephone conversations to O.E.R.. They described their work with the Council for Unity as some of the most

meaningful and valuable experiences of their long (20, 30 years) teaching careers. They seemed to care for the students. Their days lasted well beyond 3 p.m. and their work weeks regularly extended into the weekends. Because of the profound commitment required for this role, they worried about burnout. These advisors were not sure how much longer they could sustain this level of physical energy, enthusiasm, and commitment, but, at present, had no plans to withdraw from this work.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Effects on Students' Lives

As presented in Table 5, most respondents reported that the Council had changed the lives of students at their schools. Respondents also elaborated on the ways in which they believe that the program has benefitted students. As might be expected, all of the responding chapter faculty advisors reported that the program had made a difference in students' lives (100 percent, n=12). In addition, all of the principals (100 percent, n=10) and uninvolved teachers (100 percent, n=15) reported that the program had made a difference in students' lives. Most of the student chapter members also reported that the program had made a difference in their lives (87 percent, n=79). Ninety percent of the chapter members responding to this question reported that they plan to continue in the Council through to graduation (90 percent, n=80).

Table 5

Perceived Overall Effectiveness[a]

Program Outcomes	Alumnae /Alumni (n=22)	Faculty Advisors (n=11-12)	Principals (n=10)	Students (n=91)	Uninvolved Teachers (n=15)
Council has made a difference in students' lives	____	100.0	100.0	86.8	100.0
Council has changed the school	____	81.8	70.0	82.4[b]	80.0
Council has added specific resources to the school	____	91.7	____	____	____
Council made a difference in life while in high school (alumni only)	95.5	____	____	____	____
Council made a difference in life as an adult (alumni only)	86.4	____	____	____	____

[a]The data presented here are the percentages of respondents replying in the affirmative.

[b]This question was asked of students in a slightly different form from the forced-choice question presented to other groups. Students were asked "What do you think are the three most important things the Council has done for this school?" The figure listed in the table represents students who gave any positive response to this open-ended question.

- The clear majority of survey respondents with varied levels of experience with the Council's program replied that the program had made a difference in the lives of students at their schools, and in fact, had changed the schools themselves.

Students' assessment of overall program impact. Student chapter members were very direct in articulating the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood that they face--wanting to explore new ideas, to feel as if life is meaningful, to feel competent, to make the world a better place, to care for other people, to establish friendships, and for many, to fall in love. They are trying to accomplish all of this in an extremely complex and demanding world. Many students also described how the Council for Unity prepared them to face these challenges. Students take great pride in their growth, in learning to work with others, in being able to rely on their wits and verbal skills--rather than on their physical skills--to communicate with people from other backgrounds. Their responses often were poignant and compelling.

A 16-year-old male, a member of one of the longer-established chapters, described the Council's impact on his life:

> I've become a better public speaker. I've grown in confidence that I never had before I joined the Council for Unity. I've gained a family which I never had before.

A 16-year-old Asian female who also is a member of that long-established chapter, described her experience:

> In the Council, I've met so many people--most of my friends are from Council. I've learned about Slavic and Chinese, about Italians and Irish. I've learned so much about how to deal with people who need help--how to talk to people and to be there for them. Council has taught me to appreciate people more--it's taught me so much [student's emphasis].

A 15-year-old male, another member of that long-established chapter, described the Council's influence on his life:

> Before I came to Council, I used to be a hoodlum. I was always in and out of trouble. I would be very violent against everyone, even my girlfriends. I'm a guy with a short temper. Then, I came to Council. Now, I don't short out as fast. I now am able to solve my problems, instead of blowing up.

A 16-year-old female member of another of the longer-standing chapters, reported that

> The Council has made me evaluate my life and how I treat others. Also, I learned how to help others.

A 17-year-old female member of a new chapter was succinct in her description of the Council's impact on her life:

> It made me more calm, more understanding, more patient.

A 16-year-old female member of a chapter just completing its first year of operation reported that:

> Council for Unity has helped me put aside any preconceived ideas and notions that may have originally caused me to pass judgement on people I didn't know. I can now appreciate much more the company of people who would have never been my friends, let alone my classmates. I've learned to stop and listen, see other views, not only my own.

A 16-year-old male, a member of another relatively new chapter, reported that the Council had made this difference in his life:

> It has made me less shy around people and now I feel more comfortable in a group. I am now able to express myself and speak my mind. I have also learned many things about the environment, myself and others.

A 16-year-old female member of this chapter noted that:

> Council has made me overcome the fear of being disliked and my fear of speaking up for myself. I also am doing the things I love, helping people.

A 17-year-old female member of a relatively new chapter, saw her life change as a result of the Council:

> Council has made me aware of how certain stereotypes can lead to extreme prejudice. Communication is a key role in Council. Listening and trying to have an open mind will broaden your views and perspectives. Attempting to understand why a person feels a certain way helps in solving conflicts.

In addition to this open-ended question, students were asked whether or not their work in the Council helped them in four specific target areas of the program. The clear majority of students reported that the program had helped them in each of the four areas. Among students responding to these questions, most indicated that their work in the Council had made them "feel more comfortable" speaking in front of groups (86 percent, n=76). Most felt that the Council had given them "a voice about injustice and bigotry" (88 percent, n=77). The Council helped many to "persuade [their] friends to recognize and go beyond bigotry" (84 percent, n=75). Finally, they reported that their work in the Council "helped [them] to deal with prejudice by talking, rather than acting, after racial incidents" (88 percent, n=78).

Students also were asked how their Council participation had affected the way they work with people outside of school--friends, families, other people in their neighborhoods. Half of

the students responding to the survey indicated that the Council had eased this interaction (51 percent, n=45). A review of student responses overall revealed that students' Council experience made work with people outside of school somewhat easier (M=4.3, median=5.0).

Most important things learned in Council. When asked to name the most important things they had learned from their work in the Council, most chapter members listed three things they had learned (n=49). Eighty-six members listed at least one thing they had learned. Across the three response opportunities provided to each respondent, the 86 chapter members answering the question offered 210 responses to this question. The response most frequently given indicated that students had gained an increased understanding of people from other groups. Students learned about other groups of people, came to understand the things they have in common with people from other groups, and to recognize that everyone deserves respect (22 percent, n=46). The response given second most frequently indicated that students valued learning ways to deal with conflict (10 percent, n=20). Other responses offered with some frequency included:

- broadly enhancing their own personal development (e.g., learning to work on your own, honesty, authenticity, self-esteem, confidence) (9 percent, n=18),
- learning strategies to enhance intergroup/racial tolerance and unity (8 percent, n=17),
- learning communication/listening skills (8 percent, n=17),
- learning to put aside differences to work together toward a common goal (7 percent, n=14),

- learning to appreciate such "family values" as love, patience, consideration, respect, loyalty, reliability, sacrifice, sharing, and compromise (6 percent, n=13), and
- learning to appreciate the experience of efficacy, learning that their work can change their world (6 percent, n=13).

Changes in students' social lives. Chapter members were asked the number of their friends who came from backgrounds or ethnic or religious groups different from their own--currently, as well as before they joined the Council. Students typically reported having an average of 13 friends from backgrounds different from their own (M=13.0, median=6.0) before joining the Council and about 24 friends from different backgrounds (M=24.0, median=20.0) since they have been in the program. Comparable figures were found when the differences were computed for individual students and then aggregated--in the course of the program, students had gained 11 new friends from backgrounds different from their own (M=10.9, median=5.0).

Students' plans for further education. Nearly all of the chapter members completing the survey replied that they planned to continue with other education after high school graduation (n=94 percent, n=84).

Alumni assessments of the program's impact. Perhaps the most powerful testimonials regarding the program's impact came from program alumni. Virtually all of the alumni respondents (n=21) replied that the program had "made a difference in [their lives] while in high school" (96 percent, n=21). Some described the impact:

> No matter what happened outside (in the real world), I would always have a place to go where no one would judge me. I [could] be myself.
>
> Thanks to [chapter faculty advisor] and Council, it helped me to graduate.

In addition, most alumni respondents replied that the program had "made a difference" in their lives after high school (86 percent, n=19). Many respondents described the difference the Council participation made in their adult lives. It appeared that the lessons learned in the Council were those that would serve a graduate for a lifetime.

For example, a 23-year-old man, who graduated in 1988 reported that

> The Council for Unity taught me to trust in others and to take risks for a greater good. If I had not learned these important values, I feel I would be lacking as a "whole" person.

A 20-year-old male graduate wrote of the Council:

> It helped me to understand that life is a hard place and only the people wanting to do something for themselves will succeed in life.

A 19-year-old male graduate of the class of 1992 reported:

> I'm a lot more open-minded to meeting new people. I'm a lot more secure when it comes to speaking my mind.

A 22-year-old woman, a 1990 graduate felt that:

> [Without the Council,] there would be no link to high school; [the] people I've met since [leaving high school] would most likely be more of one group.

Another 1990 graduate, a 22-year-old male, wrote that:

> The Council taught me to try to solve conflicts peacefully, rather than physically. The Council also taught me to be more open and trusting in all of my relationships with other people.

Eighteen alumni elaborated on the ways in which the Council had changed their lives. Most commonly, they noted that the Council had helped them to understand and respect cultures and religions other than their own (28 percent, n=5). Their work in the program also gave them a sense of efficacy (17 percent, n=3) and made them more open-minded and trusting of other people (17 percent, n=3).

School Effects

Most of the respondents questioned reported that the Council had changed their schools and that it was an asset to their schools. Survey responses relevant to this issue were presented earlier in this report in Table 5. As this table indicates, four-fifths of the students (82 percent, n=75), faculty advisors (82 percent, n=9), and uninvolved teachers (80 percent, n=12) reported that their schools had "changed as a result of the operation of its Council chapter." Seventy percent (n=7) of the principals gave the same response. As is also presented in Table 5, all of the faculty advisors, principals, and uninvolved teachers and 87 percent of the chapter members replied that the program had "made a difference in students' lives" at their schools.

As might have been expected, staff directly involved in the program assessed the program in a positive light. In addition, the principals were impressed by the Council's efforts, as were

teachers who had not been involved with the Council. Respondents described the program's influence on their schools in terms of promoting student efficacy and interaction among diverse school populations, unifying faculty, and generally, promoting a school-wide spirit that was constructive and inclusive.

One principal, whose school had only recently opened its Council chapter, described the Council's influence in these terms:

> [There is] a more positive atmosphere; [a] more friendly and cooperative spirit, fewer fights and disputes.

Another principal, representing a school which has enjoyed a Council chapter for four years expressed his equally positive view of the program:

> Council is a group of students dedicated toward the ideals of racial and ethnic harmony and positive intergroup relations. They work wonderfully together and are a dedicated group. They add a needed and positive dimension to the school.

A teacher uninvolved with the program and also from a school with a new chapter this year linked this change in the school with the Council's program:

> The students, who are from many backgrounds, worked together and got to know each other. They tried to spread this feeling to their friends. I have seen these students socialized in the hall and I feel that this is a step in the right direction for this school.

Two faculty advisors, both of whose chapters were organized in the last two years, described the changes in their schools. The first described the Council's contribution to the school in these terms:

> First, it seemed to unify the faculty, students and administration for a common goal. All the projects (food, toy drives) and presentations made everyone work together. Second, it showed that there are others less fortunate than us and we can make ourselves better because of Council.

A second faculty advisor related these school changes to the Council's presence:

> (1) Students are aware that there is a diverse group of <u>real</u> students actually <u>doing</u> things to bring people together. (2) Reduction of tension. (3) Reduction of the number of situations in which our "at-risk members" were involved. (4) There is a more positive and inclusive environment.

The advisors to two of the longer-established chapters noted these changes in the lives of chapter members:

> Students have learned to accept responsibility, confront their own prejudices, and learned to "come out of their shell[s]."

> They feel free to express themselves. They have taken on the responsibility of creating change. They are frustrated by apathy. They are active in creating a better community and a better world.

Two advisors of chapters opened in 1993-94 also described positive impacts on students' lives related to program participation:

> Students of every description in our school seem to be impressed by the example of our extremely diverse Council working together. Our own Council members have repeatedly expressed their satisfaction with the idea that they are actually spending time with and enjoying the company of students they might never have associated with. High visibility activities (i.e., talent show, toy drives, bulletin boards) have set a positive tone in the school. Bringing people together is becoming "cool."

> [The program] gave [students] a sense of "belonging", [it] showed a caring attitude via direct involvement (phone calls to homes).

In addition to the questions asked of other groups, the faculty advisors were asked to describe any resources the chapters had added to their schools. As is noted in Table 5, most of the faculty advisors reported that the Council program had "added specific resources" to their schools (92 percent, n=11). They cited a variety of resources:

> We have added a curriculum on negotiation and one on group dynamics. In addition, we have purchased posters, artwork and cultural artifacts, and equipment for cultural food fairs (stands, racks, etc.).

> We've become known as a place to be safe, a place where students that have problems can come in to talk, a place where activities are abundant.

> The Council is a place where many good, caring students can be together and not feel out of place. My class is picking up speed with many people wanting to join. We've also been in many newspapers and on national television, which projects a positive image for the school.

> [The program provides the school with] a place where students feel free to resolve their issues without criticisms.

> It provides a place for students to explore and be proud of their cultures without feeling threatened for being different. Students can voice their opinions and vent their frustrations about problems in the world and their immediate communities.

As is apparent, most of the comments offered lauded the program. Still, a principal whose school has hosted one of the longer-running Council chapters and whose responses to other questions revealed an appreciation of the Council's efforts, saw room for improvement:

> Council was not fulfilling its mission to the extent that it should have. Things are improving, but we must involve more kids who feel alienated.

Perceptions of the Program by the Broader School Community

Many of the groups were asked to describe the perceptions of the Council held by other members of the school community. Chapter members were asked whether or not "other students in [their] school[s] think that the Council is a good idea." Among chapter members answering this question (n=88), most reported that their classmates considered the Council "a good idea" (88 percent, n=77).

Nine of the principals (90 percent) stated that they view the Council as a positive influence on their schools (n=9). When asked to describe the role the Council plays in the larger school community, half of the principals responding to the question (n=4) described the Council as a mentor or family to students, encouraging students to work together. Two other principals saw the program as an integral part of their schools' conflict resolution effort. When asked how the Council is viewed by teachers and students uninvolved in the program, half of the principals said that the program was viewed favorably (50 percent, n=5).

Effect on school safety. Each of the surveys included questions related to the influence of the program on school safety. Table 6 summarizes the responses to the survey questions addressing the safety-related program goals. As presented in this table, the average ratings collected for each of the

Table 6

Perceived Mean Effectiveness in Meeting Safety-Related Program Goals

Program Goals	Alumnae /Alumni (n=22)	Faculty Advisors (n=12)	Principals (n=10)	Students (n=90)	Uninvolved Teachers (n=12-15)
Making school safer	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.9
Serving as a preventive measure[a]	___	4.3	4.3	___	3.9
Serving as a means to alleviate a potential crisis	___	4.4	4.1	___	4.1
Serving as a means to enhance school security	___	4.0	3.9	___	3.1
Altering the number of bias-related incidents at the school[b]	___	___	66.7%	___	___

[a]Neither this question nor the two that follow it were asked of alumni or of students.

[b]This forced-choice question was asked only of principals, six of whom answered the question. The figure represents the percentage of principals who reported that the Council's work had "affected the number of bias-related incidents" at their schools (n=4).

- An examination of the mean ratings from each of the respondent groups reveals that the program's efforts to meet its safety-related goals were considered to be effective.

respondent groups indicated that they considered the program to be effectively meeting its safety-related goals.

Four out of six principals responding indicated that the Council's work had affected the number of bias-related incidents at their schools, although they did not provide any specific data to this effect.

Most Helpful Program Elements

The program elements most frequently cited by students as helpful were the development of communication skills (cited in 15 percent of the responses to this question, n=19) and other personal development, such as becoming more patient, open-minded, or self-disciplined (15 percent, n=19). Students also appreciated learning about the backgrounds of other people (e.g., learning how much they share with people from other backgrounds) (12 percent, n=15) and making new friends (11 percent, n=14). When asked to identify "the most rewarding aspects of [their] participation in the Council for Unity," the 20 program alumni answering the question most often cited the experience of efficacy or competence-building (20 percent, n=4) and the friendships they had established (15 percent, n=3).

Eighty-two percent of the students listed a variety of contributions the program had made to their schools. The most commonly given response indicated that the program "helped to build unity in the midst of diversity" or to bring strangers together (18 percent, n=31). Other frequently cited responses referred to:

- the program's capacity to "solve problems" at their schools (e.g., desegregate the school, beautify the school, organize large-scale projects engaging students and staff school-wide) (17 percent, n=29),
- its work to open minds and introduce new ideas (e.g., developing cultural awareness, consciousness-raising work regarding prejudice and racism) (16 percent, n=28),
- its efforts to make the school a safer place by stopping conflicts and preventing others) (14 percent, n=25), and
- the opportunities it has afforded students to assume responsibility, to lead, and more broadly, to feel efficacious (e.g., to work together and make a difference, developing students as role models and leaders) (10 percent, n=17).

Table 7 summarizes responses addressing the effectiveness of the principal components of the Council program. As presented in the table, the responses offered indicate that the program's efforts to enhance self-esteem were rated most highly, followed by its multicultural events and group dynamics program. The performing arts and peer mediation components were rated as the least effective program components. All of the group means were above the scale midpoints, suggesting that respondents considered the program elements to be effective.

Program Elements in Need of Improvement

The nine faculty advisors cited a full spectrum of administrative remedies designed to identify the program elements most in need of improvement (e.g., expand recruitment to reach more of the students truly in need of the program, improve the group dynamics and peer mediation programs, expand the time the Council class is offered beyond one class period, make more time available from the Council headquarters' staff for the chapters,

Table 7

Perceived Effectiveness of Program Components[a]

Program Components	Alumnae/ Alumni (n=22)	Faculty Advisors (n=12)	Principals (n=10)	Students[b] (n=85-89)	Uninvolved Teachers (n=9-14)
Peer Mediation	4.3	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.6
Community Service	4.5	4.3	3.9	3.9	4.0
Multicultural Events	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.4
Leadership Training	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.3
Self-Esteem Enhancement	4.6	4.7	4.4	4.1	4.6
Group Dynamics	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.0	4.4
Student Empowerment	4.5	4.5	4.4	3.9	4.2
Performing Arts	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.7

[a]The program components were assessed using a series of five-point Likert scales (1=not at all effective through 5=extremely effective). Each of the respondent groups were presented with basically the same question, viz., "How effective do you consider the following elements of the Council's program at this school?" (faculty advisors, principals, uninvolved teachers) or "How effective do you consider the following elements of the Council's program--in your experience?" (alumni) or "How helpful have you found the following parts of the Council's program?" (chapter members). Group means are provided.

[b]Students (chapter members) were asked to assess each program component in terms of its helpfulness, rather its effectiveness.

- Overall, the program's efforts to enhance self-esteem were rated most highly, followed by its multicultural events and group dynamics program. The performing arts and peer mediation components were rated as the least effective program components. All of the group means were above the scale midpoints and suggest that respondents consider the program elements to be effective. Alumnae/i rated program components more highly than did other respondent groups and students currently participating in the program assigned the lowest ratings.

offer more events in Queens, where now most are held in Brooklyn).

The principals (n=8) were most interested in expanding and broadening student recruitment, expanding the program's funding, and in a more timely communication of program-related opportunities (e.g., acceptance or rejection for job opportunities, scholarships).

The 13 uninvolved teachers considering this question most often were interested in improving the program's peer mediation component (31 percent, n=4).

Half of the ten alumni answering this question believed that the program could be improved by further program development (50 percent, n=5). The alumni mentioned specific content areas they would recommend the program address (e.g., gender-related issues including sexual harassment, date rape, sex education; tolerance for gays and lesbians; environmental concerns; helping students to accept more responsibility and to better deal with the consequences of their actions and decisions).

Just over one-third of chapter members responding (n=89) indicated that they would have appreciated more help with some aspect of their Council experience (37 percent, n=33). Most commonly, these students wanted increased funding for the program (e.g., to allow them to provide more services to sick children, to pay for the induction dinner)(19 percent, n=6) and more opportunities for community service work (16 percent, n=5).

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This distinctive and multifaceted program is deeply appreciated by the students, staff, and administrators. Its mission and program requirements are clearly articulated. The Council for Unity can boast a highly committed staff, a determined group of participating students, and alumni who have continued their involvement with the program beyond high school graduation.

The basic tenets of the program (viz., student empowerment, family atmosphere, self-esteem enhancement, program identity) seem to be meaningful to participating students, as well as to their high schools. Participating students have made friends from backgrounds different from their own. Current chapter members reported that the program has helped them gain confidence, learn how to communicate with and help other people, and become better public speakers. Chapter members report that they have grown more comfortable with other people. They have overcome their "fear of being disliked and of speaking up." Many believe that they are capable of self-critique and of looking at a situation as another person might see it. Members are proud of their newly-developed abilities to resolve conflict with words rather than force. In addition, they report that the things they have learned in the Council have made it easier for them to work with people outside of school--with their families, friends, and other people in their neighborhoods. Program alumni reported

that the positive effects of their program involvement (e.g., helping them to understand and respect cultures and religions other than their own) have endured into adulthood. Based upon the perceptions of participants, the program appears to be an effective strategy to help students and schools meet the challenges of successfully negotiating adolescence in an increasingly demanding and diverse society.

Administrators and faculty uninvolved in the program also were pleased with the accomplishments of the program to-date. They consider the program beneficial to chapter members, an asset to their schools, and urged the program's expansion to serve more students within their schools.

While the number of students actively involved in the program, as reflected in the class lists submitted by chapter advisors, are relatively small given the overall enrollments of those high schools, the program is perceived to be a valuable asset to the participating high schools. There was considerable agreement among the survey respondents regarding the need to expand the program to reach more students within the participating high schools--in greater numbers and in the ethnic diversity, academic level, and level of involvement in the school community (e.g., alienated, engaged) represented within the currently participating schools. For the program administrators, though, a dilemma seems to be how to expand the program without sacrificing one of the program's primary elements, its intimate, family atmosphere.

Most survey respondents were very positive in their evaluation of the program. Still, respondents offered several suggestions for its improvement. Based upon the findings of this evaluation, O.E.R. offers the following recommendations within the recognized constraints of the budget:

- Further develop the Council's program--expand the specific content areas the program addresses (e.g., gender-related issues including sexual harassment, date rape, sex education; tolerance for gays and lesbians; environmental concerns) and deepen the program's coverage of that content (e.g., helping students to accept more responsibility and to better deal with the consequences of their actions and decisions; improve the group dynamics and peer mediation programs).

- To reach a wider range of students, expand the program offered within participating schools. It was suggested that the Council class be offered for more than one class period daily.

- Further develop the administrative and programmatic resources available to the chapter staff. This could be accomplished by allocating more Council headquarters' staff time to direct chapter guidance, and/or more effectively utilizing resources beyond the current Council staff (e.g., the expertise of a citywide network of community-based organizations).

- Consider ongoing outreach to and networking among individual chapters and the program's headquarters staff with community-based organizations (CBOs). Many CBOs, in communities across the city, have long histories of working in a spirit of inclusion and working to promote healthy, diverse communities (e.g., settlement houses). Many provide outreach services beyond their immediate communities. In addition to traditions of community service and improvement, many CBOs can boast exceptionally capable and dedicated staffs. The organizations and staffs might serve as resources to the program and the individual chapters (e.g., guidance in program development and administrative systems), and as possible venues for chapter members' community service work. The interaction could potentially strengthen the larger communities and the schools' relationships with their communities. At present, these organizations appear to be untapped resources for many Council chapters.

- Improve the administrative support provided to chapters (e.g., more timely communication of such program-related opportunities as acceptance or rejection for job opportunities and scholarships). Chapter members reported that the costs of major Council events (e.g., induction dinners) prohibited some chapter members and their families from attending. Particularly for those recently developed chapters, the program headquarters needs to offer support (e.g., fundraising expertise) for fuller participation in the events that are so important to the members' program experience. The chapters also would benefit from a headquarters-supported systematic and regular exchange among the more recently established and the longer-established chapters.

- Broaden the geographic base of program-wide activities beyond the program's historic roots in Brooklyn. Conducting events in other boroughs would encourage the participation of members of newer chapters, and would extend at least the environmental range of the program and its members.

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