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# To Be Involved or Not to Be Involved? Using Entertainment-Education in an HIV-Prevention Program for Youngsters

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The purpose of this study is to gain insight into factors that are associated with youngsters' involvement with dance4life, a global HIV-prevention program. The Youth Engagement Framework, which includes factors impacting youngsters' involvement on three levels (individual, social, and system), was used as a theoretical base. In total, 67 youngsters participated, with 21 of them still involved in dance4life's program, and 46 not. They either were individually interviewed or took part in subsequent online or face-to-face focus groups. Results show that both individual, social, and system-level factors are associated with youngsters' involvement. Involved youngsters have higher intrinsic motivation to prevent HIV, receive more social support from parents and friends, and are stimulated more by dance4life to remain part of their program than youngsters who are no longer involved. Hence, HIV-prevention programs should focus on all three levels simultaneously to successfully stimulate youngsters' involvement.

Youngsters<sup>1</sup> aged 15 to 24 years account for almost half of new HIV infections (UNAIDS, 2008). Because of these high rates, numerous school-based HIV-prevention programs have been set up worldwide. To be effective, such interventions should be based on a sound theoretical foundation (Gallant & Maticka-Tyndale, 2004; Kirby, 2000) and incorporate elements that focus on creating social change (UNAIDS, 2008).

One organization within the field of HIV prevention among adolescents that incorporates both theory and a focus on social change is dance4life (d4l). D4l is a globally active organization that aims to (a) educate and empower young people about HIV/AIDS and sexual reproductive health and (b) encourage youngsters to become part of a social youth movement consisting of 1 million youngsters by 2014, called

agents4change (a4c),<sup>2</sup> a movement that helps push back HIV and the stigma that surrounds it (dance4life, 2008). Specifically, d4l's social youth movement should remind the world leaders about the Millennium Development Goal number 6 (MDG6), target 1: "Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS."

The d4l Dutch intervention consists of a school-based program, called schools4life, and a mass-media campaign. Table 1 gives a short description of the four phases that make up schools4life, that is, the heart connection tour (hct), skills4life (s4l), act4life (a4l), and the dance4life event. Before the start of schools4life, schoolteachers choose a group of students with whom they form an organization team (OT), which is responsible for streamlining and facilitating the intervention. After schools4life has ended, d4l approaches all OT members and invites them to continue collaborating with d4l. If they agree, they become a special member and are part of d4l's social movement. These special members help d4l with developing policy and planning special projects around HIV prevention (dance4life, 2009).

To realize their aims, d4l uses an entertainment-educational communication strategy in the form of music and dance to attract youngsters' attention to its message and involve them in the d4l HIV-prevention program and social youth movement. Entertainment as a vehicle for health

<sup>1</sup>The defining properties of the terms "youth" and "youngsters" as used in this study are children in their teens, gender nonspecific, and still in high school.

<sup>2</sup>An agent4change (a4c) has participated in at least two of the three essential components (hct, s4l, a4l; see Table 1) of the dance4life program (dance4life, 2008).

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TABLE 1  
d4I HIV-Prevention Program

Elements schools4life	
heart connection tour (hct)	First phase. Youngsters at school get energized and excited to take responsibility for preventing HIV in their community by means of an interactive, entertainment educational performance. The hct uses an alternation of fun with education, and the hct team includes (among others) people who are infected with HIV or have AIDS, who share their personal stories with the participating youngsters. The aim of the hct is to <i>inspire youngsters</i> for dance4life's intervention.
skills4life (s4l)	Second phase. s4l is an in-depth educational and empowerment program that involves knowledge transfer around HIV/AIDS and the acquisition of life skills, such as negotiation skills and leadership. The aim of s4l is to <i>educate and empower youngsters</i> .
act4life (a4l)	Third phase. During a4l youngsters start contributing to HIV/AIDS prevention by becoming involved in activities such as fundraising, volunteering, awareness raising, and advocacy. The aim of a4l is to <i>encourage action</i> among participants.
dance4life event	The fourth phase of the intervention is an international music and dance event held every 2 years on the Saturday before World AIDS Day where the a4c in each country come together. The national d4l events are interconnected via a live satellite link. The aim of the event is to <i>celebrate achievements</i> of the youngsters.

prevention and promotion gratifies the need for amusement as well as the need for information (Bouman, 2008) and has been successfully applied in previous HIV-prevention programs (e.g., Bertrand, O'Reilly, Denison, Anhang, & Sweat, 2006; Karlyn, 2001; Vaughan, Rogers, Singhal, & Swahele, 2000). In the Netherlands, the Dutch television series *Costa* was broadcast in 2001, aiming to influence Dutch youngsters' norms and values regarding safe sex (Bouman, 2004).

Previous entertainment-education interventions have mostly taken the format of television and radio soap operas. Thus, d4l use of music and dance is a unique and scarcely researched form of entertainment-education to involve youngsters in HIV-prevention programs. d4l cooperates with famous DJs (disc jockeys), artists, and world leaders, so-called ambassadors, as part of its communication strategy, thereby drawing on observational learning techniques that are central to entertainment-education (e.g., Papa et al., 2000; Sood, Shefner-Rogers, & Sengupta, 2006), and largely based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT, 1997). According to SCT, observational learning through the use of role models not only influences audience awareness and attitudes toward a socially desirable goal but, more importantly, has the power to enhance people's (collective) ability to perform a specific behavior and gain more control over the way one functions (i.e., their self-efficacy and collective efficacy).

Because music is often a central component of youngsters' daily life, d4l use of music may be a particularly effective communication strategy. "Music allows young people to portray and 'image' the outside world, satisfying their emotional needs" (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000). Furthermore, sharing musical experiences contributes to establishing a collective identity and supports the formation of groups (Lemieux, 2008), thereby increasing its influence on the individual. Thus, through the use of dance, music, and youth icons (i.e., the ambassadors), d4l uses a potentially effective entertainment-educational communication strategy to encourage youngsters to learn more about HIV/AIDS and become part of their social youth movement.

Despite its strong theoretical base, results of an international study of d4l's intervention showed that involving youngsters during and after schools4life has finished is problematic (Hermanns, van Weert, Linn, & Schouten, 2009; Van Weert, Hermanns, Linn, & Schouten, 2011). As results of that quantitative study did not allow in-depth knowledge about why this might be the case, a qualitative follow-up study was deemed necessary. The overall purpose of this follow-up study is to gain more insight into factors that are associated with youngsters' (lack of) involvement with the d4l HIV-prevention program and social youth movement.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Youth Engagement Framework (YEF) was used as a theoretical framework guiding our research (Rose-Krasnor, 2009), because it distinguishes between two types of factors associated with youngsters' involvement with an activity, initiating and sustaining factors, capturing both aims of d4l, that is, involving youngsters in its HIV-prevention program and subsequently involving them in its social youth movement. Initiating factors influence the likelihood of a youngster becoming involved with an activity, which can occur on three levels: individual (intrapersonal), social (interpersonal), and system level (community or organizational). Sustaining factors influence the decision to continue with the activity, which can occur on the same three levels (see Figure 1). In the case of d4l, the initiating factors refer to factors that are associated with youngsters' involvement in schools4life (i.e., hct, s4l, a4l, d4l event), while sustaining factors refer to factors associated with youngsters' involvement as a special member in d4l's social youth movement. Note that the YEF also includes outcomes of youngsters' involvement, reflecting results of engaging in the activity, but these are, given the study's process-oriented nature, beyond the scope of this study. All components of the YEF are indirectly or directly connected to each other.

Based on a literature review about youth involvement, the YEF was adapted and factors were made specific for

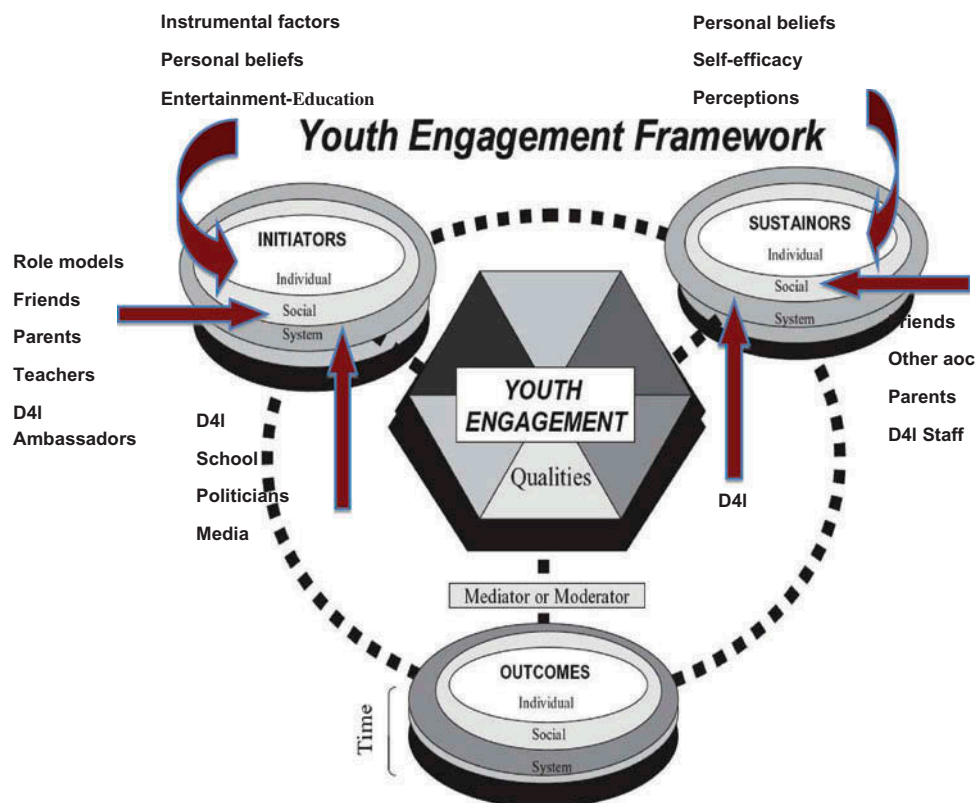


FIGURE 1 Adapted YEF. (color figure available online).

this study. With regard to initiating factors, Pancer and Pratt's (1999) Model of Volunteer Involvement describes different types of personal initiating factors influencing youngsters' involvement in youth volunteering activities, such as youngsters' beliefs about acting out of a sense of "doing what is right." Such personal beliefs are related to a person's ego involvement (Sherif & Sherif, 1967), which is comprised of someone's internalized values, standards, and norms. Applied to this study, a youngster who has a high ego involvement with d4I values is more likely to become involved than youngsters with a low ego involvement (Kyle & Mowen, 2005). Instrumental initiating factors are related to youngsters gaining something out of engaging in a youth activity (see also MacNeela, 2008). In the case of d4I, this could be the prospect of joining the festivities at the d4I event. In addition, d4I use of an entertainment-educational communication strategy may act as an individual initiating factor, because youngsters' attitudes toward such a communication strategy might be more positive than their attitudes toward more traditional modes of HIV education and prevention.

Social-level initiators refer to interpersonal influence, meaning that youngsters might be stimulated to get involved in an activity by people in their surroundings (Pancer & Pratt, 1999). As noted before, observational learning is an essential component of SCT (Bandura, 1997) and is widely employed in entertainment-education interventions. In the

case of d4I, role models that are employed to enhance observational learning include people who are infected with HIV and who share their stories with the youngsters during the intervention, and d4I ambassadors (i.e., celebrities who are affiliated with d4I). Other role models can be teachers, parents, friends, and peers. For instance, teachers act as a social-level initiator when they choose youngsters for collaboration in the OT, and parents are a main influence on a youngsters' choice of leisure activities (Hultsman, 1993; Shannon, 2006).

System-level initiators are community and organizational factors (Rose-Krasnor, 2009), such as schools that can stimulate youngsters to engage in prosocial behavior as part of their policy. Popular media targeting youngsters, for instance, television networks like MTV and its Dutch equivalent TMF, who do specials on HIV/AIDS and d4I, may also influence youngsters' participation in the d4I program (TMF, 2010). Furthermore, politicians have the potential to act as positive system-level initiators by clearly putting HIV/AIDS prevention on their agenda.

The YEF describes sustaining factors as vital for reaching sustained youth engagement (Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, & Loiselle, 2002). Examples of individual-level sustaining factors are youngsters' perceptions about their involvement in the activity, such as feelings of making a difference, being appreciated, enjoyment, and personal beliefs about HIV/AIDS, that is, their ego involvement (Kyle & Mowen,

2005; Lerner et al., 2005; Pancer & Pratt, 1999). Another individual-level sustainer is youngsters' self-efficacy, the feeling of confidence in one's ability to act, which they can develop during the intervention (Bandura, 1997). When youngsters feel more confident and empowered, further actions and activities are more likely (Campbell, Gibbs, Maimane, Nair, & Sibiya, 2009).

Social-level sustaining factors are other a4c, d4l staff, parents, and friends (Pancer & Pratt, 1999). Parents can reinforce their children's involvement by encouraging them to continue their activity (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000). The same factors can also act as inhibitors, though. For instance, peers have been found to be an important reason not to stay involved with an activity (Hultsman, 1993). Regarding system-level factors, schools can act as a sustaining factor by facilitating youngsters, for instance, by giving youngsters time off from school to perform activities (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Note that this possible sustaining factor is most effective when the youngsters feel they have real control over the task they have been given (i.e., have sufficient self-efficacy; Morgan & Streb, 2001). In our study, we focus predominantly on the organization d4l itself as a possible system-level sustainer, for instance, when it supplies special treatment to youngsters as part of their special members program (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

In sum, there are two types of factors (i.e., initiators and sustainers) that are possibly associated with youngsters' (continued) involvement with d4l's HIV-prevention program. Furthermore, within both types of factors, three levels can be distinguished: individual, social, and system. The aim of this study is to gain more insight into which specific factors are associated with youngsters' involvement with d4l's HIV-prevention program, and why youngsters do or do not choose to become a special member of d4l's social youth movement. In addition, we explored whether certain demographic characteristics are associated with youngsters' involvement. The central research question is therefore:

Which factors distinguish between youngsters who are involved and remain involved with d4l's social youth movement and youngsters who are not involved in d4l's HIV-prevention program and social youth movement?

## METHOD

### Participants

This study makes a distinction between "active a4c" and "passive a4c. An active a4c is someone who was still active for d4l at the time of this study (December 2009–March 2010); most active a4c are registered as special member (see later discussion). A passive a4c is someone who participated in schools4life in 2008 but did not partake in actions for d4l afterward. Inclusion criteria for youngsters to be eligible for this study were (1) having participated in schools4life in 2008, and (2) having participated in at least two of the three

components (hct, s4l, a4l) of the intervention and thereby earning the label a4c.

As the number of active a4c (special members) was limited ( $n = 47$ ) we started to approach all registered active a4c, using a list provided by d4l. Twenty of them were not eligible because they were already special members before 2008. Three of them did not respond to e-mail or phone. Of the remaining 24 special members, all agreed to participate. To recruit additional active a4c that were not registered as special members, an e-mail was sent to 8000 youngsters from a d4l database, asking them who attended schools4life in 2008 and were still active in the organization to participate in the study. Twelve responded to the mail, of whom six did not fulfill the inclusion criteria. The remaining six agreed to participate. Thus, in total, 30 active a4c were eligible. However, seven did not participate due to logistical reasons, leaving a total of 23 active a4c.

As the implementation of elements of the d4l intervention might differ between schools, we were concerned with ensuring a match between active and passive a4c by school. Therefore, passive a4c were recruited from the same schools as the active a4c who agreed to participate. Seven of the nine schools that included active a4c supplied a list of students. Of the 398 youngsters from these schools, we randomly contacted 79; nine were not eligible, because they did not participate in schools4life in 2008. From the remaining 70 youngsters, 47 (67.1%) agreed to participate. To ensure sufficient geographical spread, four schools that did not deliver active a4c were contacted as well. Two of them provided a list of students. Of the 621 youngsters on the list, 12 were randomly approached, and eight (66.7%) agreed to participate. During the already-mentioned recruiting e-mail for active a4c, two passive a4c replied as well; they were included in the study, too. Eventually, 25 a4c did not take part in the study due to logistical reasons, leaving a total of 32 passive a4c. Additionally, one school that included active a4c and did not supply a list of passive a4c was asked to facilitate a face-to-face focus group with passive a4c. A local teacher recruited 12 youngsters, thereby acquiring the optimal upper bound of focus-group sizes (Bischooping & Dykema, 1999).

### Data Gathering

This study made use of a multimethod design to gather data in order to capitalize on the strengths of each method: in-depth individual interviews, four asynchronous online focus groups (OFGs), and one face-to-face (FTF) focus group. The interviews were carried out first, enabling us to explore in depth the different themes of youngsters' involvement with d4l. Data derived from the interviews were used as input for the subsequent focus groups. OFGs give participants more opportunity to reflect on their answers than FTF focus groups (Meyer, 2003; Tates et al., 2009), generate significantly more new answers than FTF focus groups, and exhibit less difference in amount of communication

between dominant and nondominant speakers (Reid & Reid, 2005), indicating that participants feel free to offer their ideas, regardless of whether they are in conflict with other participants' ideas (Walston & Lissitz, 2000). A disadvantage might be that OFGs yield less response than FTF focus groups (see Weissman, 1998), because of "no-show" (Stewart & Williams, 2005). Therefore, we also conducted an additional FTF focus group. Participants were randomly allocated to the interviews or OFGs; all of them gave their informed consent.

### Interviews

Eleven active a4c (six girls and five boys) and 12 passive a4c (six girls and six boys) were interviewed. The interview was semistructured, using a topic list that was deduced from the theory, covering both initiating factors and sustaining factors on all levels as described in the theoretical background. The topic list consisted of nine general themes (i.e., activity itself, continuation after schools4life, agents of change, special members, the international social movement, HIV/AIDS, system involvement, identity, music and dance, identity and involvement), about which 57 specific questions were asked (e.g., "Is the topic HIV/AIDS important to you?," "Do you feel connected with other a4c?," "Do you think youngsters can exert an influence on the topic of HIV/AIDS?"). Interviews were held in January–February 2010 by two trained research assistants and ranged from 1 to 1.5 hours. All interviews were held at locations that were chosen by the interviewees and where they could talk undisturbed (e.g., at school, home, quiet public places). All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### Focus Groups

Ten active a4c (seven girls and three boys) and 22 passive a4c (13 girls and nine boys) participated in four OFGs. Asynchronous OFGs were held on four specially designed websites. Results of the interviews indicated four main themes that were prominent issues to the youngsters: schools4life, social youth movement, involvement with danc4life, and system involvement. From these themes four propositions were made that were posted every morning during four consecutive days on the website (e.g., "The topic HIV/AIDS does not receive enough attention from politics, media and celebrities. Therefore, we as youngsters should start taking action."). Every proposition was accompanied by two quotes collected from the interviews, with opposing views on the matter to stimulate discussion. The day after the fourth day, an open-ended question was added asking youngsters for their suggestions to improve upon the intervention. Online focus groups ran for 2 weeks, with two focus groups running simultaneously every week. Participants could log in at any time, thereby allowing them to reflect on their answers (Meyer, 2003; Tates et al., 2009). Moderating was

done by two researchers from 10:00 a.m. until approximately 11:00 pm. A significant part of the interview questions served as follow-through questions during the OFGs, making sure all topics of interest were covered.

An additional FTF focus group including 12 passive a4c (10 girls, two boys) was organized. The same propositions and quotes in the OFGs were used, as well as the follow-through questions. The duration of the focus group was a little over an hour. This focus group was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### Analysis

Data were analyzed using MAXQDA 2007, a widely used qualitative data analysis software program to systematically organize and interpret textual data (www.maxqda.com, n.d.; Lewins & Silver, 2007). The main categories were deduced from the theory and formulated to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive: initiating factors on (a) individual, (b) social, and (c) system level, and sustaining factors on (d) individual, (e) social, and (f) system level. Data analysis was an ongoing, iterative process involving multiple readings of transcripts and making comparisons between transcripts, using the constant comparative method (Hutchinson & Wilson 2001). This comparison allowed for defining the basic properties of categories and delineation of the contexts in which they occurred (Thompson, McClement, & Daenink, 2005). Three researchers (SH, ES, and MV) conducted the analyses and discussed the appropriateness of the emerging categories and subcategories. Two coders (SH and ES) categorized 10% of the same data independently. Their categorizations were compared and disagreements were discussed with other members of the research team until agreement was reached. The subcategories that emerged from our analysis were categorized under the main categories of the YEF, and the most common ones are discussed in the Results section.

## RESULTS

### Sample

Table 2 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of active and passive a4c. In both groups, the majority is female. Active participants are significantly older ( $M = 16.8$  years) than passive participants ( $M = 14.7$  years), and their current educational level was, on average, higher.

### Initiating Factors

#### Individual Level

*Ego involvement versus external incentives.* A majority of both passive and active a4c youngsters are unaware of d4l's main aim, creating a social youth movement around HIV/AIDS prevention, and do not feel

TABLE 2  
Characteristics of Participants by Target Group (N = 67)

	Interviews (n = 23)				Focus groups (n = 44)				Total (n = 67)			
	Active (n = 11)		Passive (n = 12)		Active (n = 10)		Passive (n = 34)		Active (n = 21)		Passive (n = 46)	
	n	%	n <sup>1</sup>	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender												
Male	5	45.5%	6	50.0%	3	30.0%	11	32.4%	8	38.1%	17	37.0%
Female	6	54.5%	6	50.0%	7	70.0%	23	67.6%	13	61.9%	29	63.0%
Age (years)												
M (SD)	16.6	(1.2) <sup>a,***</sup>	14.6	(1.2)	16.9	(2.3) <sup>b,*</sup>	14.8	(1.2)	16.8	(1.8) <sup>c,***</sup>	14.7	(1.2)
Range	15–18		13–17		14–22		13–17		14–22		13–17	
Educational level												
Lower general secondary education	1	11.1% <sup>a,#</sup>	7	58.3%	1	10.0% <sup>b,**</sup>	17	53.1%	2	10.5% <sup>c,***</sup>	24	54.4%
Higher general secondary education	4	44.4%	2	16.7%	2	20.0%	8	25.0%	6	31.6%	10	22.7%
Pre-university education	4	44.4%	3	25.0%	7	70.0% <sup>b,**</sup>	7	21.9%	11	57.9% <sup>c,***</sup>	10	22.7%
Living arrangements												
With mother	10	90.9%	12	100%	10	100%	28	96.6%	20	95.2%	40	97.6%
With father	8	72.7%	10	83.3%	9	100%	26	92.9%	17	85.0%	36	90.0%
With brother(s) and/or sister(s)	6	54.4%	10	83.3%	9	100%	26	100%	15 <sup>c,*</sup>	75.0%	36	94.7%

Note. Significant differences indicated by: #  $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Values of  $n$  vary slightly due to missing data.

<sup>a</sup>Significant difference between active and passive respondents in interview group.

<sup>b</sup>Significant difference between active and passive respondents in focus groups.

<sup>c</sup>Significant difference between active and passive respondents in total group.

personally involved with the topic at the start of the intervention. They mainly associate d4l with doing something good for people in other countries where HIV/AIDS is more urgent, rather than being it a Dutch issue as well: "The chance of contracting HIV/AIDS is not that big in the Netherlands" (passive male a4c (14) in focus group). Thus, among all a4c, ego involvement with HIV/AIDS is quite low at the start of the intervention.

A noticeable difference between the two groups is that active a4c mention more frequently being intrinsically motivated to help other people, while most passive a4c attach more importance on external incentives to participate, such as the d4l event at the end of the program: "There are youngsters who are not particularly interested in AIDS or d4l, but were only too glad to go the d4l event. For that reason, these youngsters collect money to help in the battle against AIDS" (passive male a4c (15) in focus group).

**Entertainment-education.** Both passive and active a4c enjoyed the hct, though active a4c were somewhat more impressed by the entertainment-educational aspects of the tour, in particular its use of music and dance, than passive a4c: "The tour is actually real fun and useful as well, to learn how many people die of AIDS, the explanations, and so on. And the dancing is wonderful, the dancing together" (active female a4c (17) in interview). In contrast, the movies that are shown during the hct are evaluated less positively: "Those [movies] were in fact, if I may say it in a bit of a rude manner, ordinary pathetic movies" (passive female a4c (15) in interview).

The other main entertainment-educational component of the intervention, the d4l event, is described by both active and passive a4c as the most enjoyable part of the program, during which a real connection with other a4c is felt through the live satellite connection: "The live contact with the other countries was also quite beautiful to see, as it was very clear how happy the children in the poor countries were" (passive female a4c (15) in focus group).

### Social Level

**Role models.** Both passive and active a4c indicate that they were impressed by the storytelling of people with HIV/AIDS during the hct and have gained much knowledge and awareness through these personal stories:

I remember a performance [during the hct] of people living with HIV in the Netherlands. That was really eye opening because we thought it was not really happening here. This man spoke quite openly about it. His story impressed us a lot and came as a real bombshell. (active male a4c (18) in interview)

Hence, the people who share their stories during the hct clearly function as positive role models for the youngsters and teach them a lot about the prevention of this disease.

In contrast, the role-modeling function of d4l's ambassadors is less positive. Knowledge about and perceived credibility of these ambassadors is mediocre and doubts about the integrity of the ambassadors are frequently expressed, albeit somewhat more pronounced among active than among

passive a4c. Some of them state that the ambassadors are only in it for themselves (e.g., for financial gain, self-promotion) and not because of their affinity with HIV/AIDS: "I have often thought that they actually do it to promote themselves" (passive female a4c (15) in interview). They are not seen as role models regarding HIV/AIDS, though they do work as an incentive to go to the d4l event where they are present and contribute to d4l's cool young image.

**Social support.** The educational component following the hct, s4l, was not part of the intervention for most youngsters. Some indicated that schoolteachers decided against it, and the few who did the interactive digital program mentioned that teachers did not support them; they had to do the program themselves: "The support of teachers at our school was insufficient. They thought it [s4l] was actually a bit senseless" (active female a4c (15) in focus group). Youngsters who were selected to be part of the OT team did, on average, feel supported by their teachers regarding other aspects of the intervention: "There were a couple of teachers who supported us really well, but these teachers were special OT teachers" (active female a4c (18) in focus group). Teachers' selection for the OT team was partly based on personal qualities of pupils, such as their organizational skills, and partly on their school level. According to the passive a4c, pupils from higher educational levels are more often asked for the OT than pupils from lower educational levels:

I think you feel more involved when you are in the OT. But in our case, the OT as usual only existed of VWO [pre-university education] classes, so other classes do not feel stimulated to do something. (passive female a4c (16) in focus group)

An important difference between active and passive a4c is that active a4c receive far more support from their parents in doing activities for d4l than passive a4c, for instance, by parents driving them to activities. As a consequence of the lack of parental support, passive a4c are less motivated to take action: "Well, he [my father] thinks it is useless [raising money] and just gives the money to me. Yeah, because they [dance4life] don't do anything with the money, half of it they keep for themselves" (passive male a4c (14) in focus group). Interestingly, active a4c have less need for social support from their friends than passive a4c, as they feel more independent in their decision to be active for d4l. Passive a4c rather do activities together with a group of friends: "With a whole group I would join, I think. [. . .] Not when I am the only one who is asked, but with other people [. . .]. If you are the only one, that is not a nice feeling" (passive female a4c (17) in interview). Thus, in contrast with the positive impact parents' support has on youngsters' involvement with d4l, the support of friends only seems to be important to passive a4c.

**Interpersonal communication.** Possibly related to the fact that active a4c receive more support from their parents

as compared to passive a4c, they also more frequently discuss the topic of HIV/AIDS at home, as well as other topics related to d4l, such as supporting good causes and helping other people. In the same vein, active a4c report more frequently that they talk with their friends about HIV/AIDS. Passive a4c find it more difficult to talk about it; they regard it as a private topic: "The biggest issue with HIV/AIDS is embarrassment, feeling embarrassed to say that you once practiced unsafe sex, feeling embarrassed to talk about sex" (passive male a4c (15) in focus group).

### System Level

**d4l.** A majority of both active and passive a4c indicate that d4l is more attractive to them than other good causes, such as Greenpeace and War Child, because it is an organization for and with youth. In addition, the entertainment-education strategy used by d4l appeals more to them than more "conventional" ways to attract potential contributors to other good causes. The transparency of d4l is also highly valued: "With dance4life you saw on a big screen how much money was collected, but WFF [World Wildlife Fund] or others do not show you anything, so I think they just [keep it for themselves]" (passive male a4c (14) in focus group).

**School, politics, media.** Passive a4c in particular do not think that HIV/AIDS is as much a "hot topic" in the Netherlands as it is in developing countries. They state that this is partly because of the lack of attention for HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands: Schools do not spend much time on educating their pupils about it, media attention to HIV/AIDS is perceived as superficial, and Dutch political leaders do not have the topic high on their agenda and, when they refer to it, mainly frame it as an international problem:

I do indeed think that it [HIV/AIDS] is hardly on the political agenda. Dutch government is rather focused on the Netherlands and HIV/AIDS is not really a big issue here. In my opinion they should start paying more attention to HIV/AIDS. (passive female a4c (14) in focus group)

Active a4c seem to have more awareness of the urgency of the issue and, although they too indicate that schools, politics and media pay insufficient attention to the topic, are of the opinion that the actions that are done are useful in creating more awareness among youngsters about the seriousness of the disease.

### Sustaining Factors

#### Individual Level

**Ego involvement.** After having followed the intervention, both passive and active a4c ego involvement with HIV/AIDS has increased. This increase is more pronounced for active than for passive a4c; they are more inspired to continue with d4l, while passive a4c report that their

feelings of connectedness with d4l rapidly diminished after schools4life. Reasons active a4c mention for wanting to remain involved are their positive perceptions of the organization's image, their positive perceptions of the goals of d4l, and because d4l is a youth organization:

You want to continue. You want to mean something to d4l, you want to mean something to people having HIV/AIDS. I don't think I would have done that if I was unfamiliar with d4l. (active male a4c (15) in interview)

As a result of their increased ego involvement, active a4c remain active for the organization by taking continued actions, such as recruiting new schools and assessing new promotion materials.

**Self-efficacy.** Although active a4c remain involved with d4l, it should be noted that despite having ideas about specific actions they wish to undertake they rarely initiate actions themselves, but rather wait for requests from d4l. This lack of initiative may have to do with their low self-efficacy concerning instigating positive changes regarding HIV/AIDS:

I would like to give education at schools, but youngsters cannot do that alone. They need help from adults. Adults have more experience with these kinds of things than youngsters, so, I think that adults should help by telling us how we should do these things. (active female a4c (18) in focus group)

Hence, although the youngsters are willing to do activities for d4l, they generally do not feel they have the capabilities to initiate these by themselves.

### *Social Level*

**Social support.** Social factors that sustain active a4c to remain involved are the support they get from their family, friends, other a4c, and d4l staff. They state that their parents are proud of their involvement and that discussion about HIV/AIDS at home has increased because of it. They also keep receiving their parents' support with doing activities for d4l. In contrast with the lack of importance active a4c attach to the social support of friends in the initiating phase, about half of them indicate that staying involved together with a friend is important:

It has to be attractive to yourself to remain involved, and I think that the environment has an important influence on that. If everyone says that you should not be active for good causes, it will decrease the chance of you remaining active. On the other hand, if your environment supports you in remaining involved, it is easier to stay active. (active female a4c (18) in focus group)

The support from and contact with other members of the organization and d4l staff is highly valued, too, though contact with other youth members could be more frequent. Contact with each other mainly takes place during special member days, organized by d4l twice a year, and through

social media, such as Hyves and MSN. Active a4c often form small subgroups themselves, consisting of a4c from the same school/region, with whom they initiate more frequent contact.

### *System Level*

**d4l.** A main reason active a4c form a more durable bond with d4l than passive a4c has to do with the differential treatment they receive from d4l during schools4life. OT members feel acknowledged by d4l because they have been selected for this team and communicate regularly with d4l about their tasks. Hence, they are intensely involved during schools4life. Furthermore, d4l asks these selected youngsters after schools4life to become a special member of their social youth movement. The youngsters who decide to do so continue to experience much support from d4l in their activities for the organization, highly value the contact they have with d4l, and are involved in decision making around new activities. In contrast, passive a4c complain about the lack of contact from d4l after schools4life. They are not invited to remain involved with d4l and do not hear from d4l anymore, except for the digital newsletter half of them receive in their mailbox. Some of them follow d4l's website after schools4life and remain interested in participating in activities, but do not know how. As a result of this lack of contact, their feelings of involvement with the organization rapidly decrease: "After the coolest party ever [d4l event], you don't hear much anymore from d4l. It seems like it's all about looking forward to the party and after that, it's over" (passive female a4c (15) in focus group).

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify which factors distinguish most strongly between youngsters who are involved in d4l's HIV-prevention program and remain involved in their social youth movement and youngsters who do not remain involved. As a theoretical framework the YEF was used (Rose-Krasnor, 2009). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study showing the applicability of the YEF within the field of HIV youth prevention campaigns. As the YEF does not specify the factors playing a role in initiating and sustaining youngsters' involvement, this study can be seen as a first step in identifying factors that might play an important role in influencing youngsters' involvement in HIV-prevention programs, and possibly other health interventions as well.

Our findings indicate that there are a number of important initiators and sustainers that distinguish active from passive a4c. Most noticeable, for passive a4c no sustaining factors were found, and the number of inhibiting initiating factors was larger for them than for active a4c. Although both passive and active a4c mention a feeling of connectedness

with d4l, these feelings decrease rapidly among passive a4c after schools4life has finished. In their opinion, d4l does not appeal to their willingness to stay active. Furthermore, passive a4c complain that OT members are often derived from higher educational levels. Hence, they also do not feel acknowledged or stimulated by their teachers to remain involved. As it is known that Dutch less educated youngsters are at increased risk to get infected with HIV (de Graaf, Meijer, Poelman & Vanwesenbeeck, 2005), more effort should go into ensuring that less educated youngsters remain involved in d4l's HIV-prevention program.

As continuity, involvement and, consequently, being an active member are key characteristics to create a social movement (Melucci, 1996), d4l's main goal to establish a social youth movement around HIV/AIDS is challenged. There is a lack of awareness and knowledge among both groups of a4c about d4l's aim to establish such a movement. Staying in contact after schools4life has finished requires greater consideration, too, as collective activities in the wake of schools4life seem to be lacking. If there is no continuation of activities or an engrained sense of membership, we cannot speak of a member of a social movement according to accepted definitions.

As noted earlier, active a4c consist of a select group, consisting of higher educated and older pupils as compared to passive a4c, which are personally approached by d4l to become a special member. Consequently, they experience feelings of belongingness, acknowledgment, and pride, and enjoy being part of d4l's social youth movement. For them, d4l has the potential to act as a "mentor" by creating meaningful opportunities for action in the youngsters' environment. However, even they do not feel fully stimulated to initiate actions on their own. Although they do have ideas they would like to implement, the majority do not proactively execute them, possibly as a result of their low self-efficacy. When establishing a real social movement, activities should ultimately continue without the actual presence of d4l though.

Their low self-efficacy may partly be explained by problems with the implementation of skills4life. An important aspect of skills4life is to educate and empower youngsters in various social skills, such as organizing, negotiating, and debating, thereby enhancing youngsters' self-efficacy. Unfortunately, teachers often decide not to implement this component, or in case skills4life is implemented are not very supportive, meaning that an essential part of the program is not implemented as intended. Gijs, Gianotten, Vanwesenbeeck, and Weijenberg (2004) state that the quality of sexual health interventions is to a large extent dependent on individual teachers, and previous research has shown that failure to adequately involve educators is a serious barrier to intervention effectiveness (Applegate, 1998). Therefore, more attention should be given to stimulating teachers to carry out s4l.

Although active a4c perceive more social support than passive a4c, especially from parents, they are not fully

satisfied with d4l ambassadors, as their affinity with HIV/AIDS is insufficiently recognized. They are not visible enough outside the d4l event and are not considered opinion leaders. Rogers (2003) acknowledged the important role held by opinion leaders, defining them as individuals who are able to influence other peoples' attitudes or behavior informally. The fulfillment of a robust leadership role, for instance, by ambassadors, is essential to strengthen the final aim of establishing a social youth movement (McAdam & Snow, 1997; Melucci, 1996). As d4l ambassadors can fulfill a major role as opinion leaders, their role requires clearer specification.

Strong facilitating initiating factors are the entertainment-educational strategy during the hct and the d4l event, and the personal stories told by people living with HIV/AIDS. Both passive and active a4c feel connected with other a4c through the live satellite connection during the event and are moved and educated by the stories of people with HIV/AIDS that are told during the hct and the d4l event. Therefore, the finding that youngsters' ego involvement increased as a result of the intervention indicates that awareness-raising of HIV/AIDS as a topic of (increasing) relevance for the Western world is successfully addressed by d4l, and that music and dance formats in entertainment-educational communication interventions are effective tools to educate youngsters about this topic.

### Study Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This study has some limitations. Among passive a4c, overall response was moderate (38.1%) and the ones who actually participated were probably the most committed passive a4c. To compensate for this possibility, an additional FTF focus group consisting of only passive a4c was organized. Although results did not show any differences between the two types of focus groups, this could be due to the fact that only one FTF focus group was conducted. As there is at present a dearth of research comparing outcomes of OFGs and FTF focus groups, future research should be carried out to gain more insight into dynamics and consequences of both methods. However, as in this study no differences in results between the OFGs and FTG focus group emerged, we can cautiously conclude that the identified initiators among passive a4c can be considered reliable.

An important next step is to conduct studies that quantitatively test the identified initiating and sustaining factors in this study among a bigger group of international a4c. This not only enables verification of the results in other countries in which d4l intervention is active, but also makes it possible to determine the weight and interrelationships of the several initiating and sustaining factors in youngsters' involvement. In addition, future research should take into consideration outcome factors of HIV-prevention programs. A full test of the YEF is a necessary prerequisite to draw more definite conclusions about the usefulness of this model in designing effective HIV-prevention interventions for youngsters. For now, it can be concluded

that entertainment-educational communication strategies that go beyond the more traditional media that are commonly used in such programs (i.e., music and dance instead of radio and television) are a strong draw for young Western people to get involved in HIV-prevention programs. Combining such a strategy with both stimulating sufficient support on social and system levels and enhancing youngsters' self-efficacy seems to be the most effective way to help decrease the significant amount of youngsters who still get infected with this serious disease on a daily base.

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