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I make better decisions

I plan to finish high school

My youth worker encouraged me  
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- I felt comfortable giving my opinions in the program
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- I know how to work with others to solve problems
- I can work well in a group, even if I'm not the one in charge
- I have met young people from other parts of my neighborhood

# Building Supports for Positive Youth Development

A study of the impact of training and networking of youth workers on outcomes for the youth they serve.

BEST Initiative/The Medical Foundation,  
South End/Lower Roxbury Youth Workers  
Alliance and Brandeis University

Mo Barbosa

# HYPOTHESIS

- **The hypothesis of the Building Supports for Positive Youth Development project is that highly trained, well networked youth workers will produce better outcomes for young people**, such as helping youth to know more about their neighborhoods; work better with others; work out conflicts; value diversity; engage with their communities; have more opportunities for youth leadership/youth voice; increase their self-efficacy; and increase their leadership skills.

# Methods

- Quasi-experimental design
- Mixed methods and multiple sources
  - Surveys
  - Series of observations
  - Interviews and focus groups
  - Triangulation to strengthen confidence in the findings
- Variation in samples

# Two Interventions

- **BEST Initiative Training**
  - Youth Worker Certificate Training
  - 32 hours of training
  - Focus on:
    - Youth development approach
    - Core competencies of youth work
    - Professionalization of youth work
  - Complimented by training in Supervision, Supporting Girls Development, YD and Violence Prevention, YD and Mental Health, etc.

# Two Interventions

- **BEST Initiative Training**
  - Principles of youth development
    - Positive Youth Outcomes
    - Youth Participation
    - Adolescent Development
    - Resiliency
    - Adultism
    - Youth Workers as Community Resources
    - Cultural Competency

# Two Interventions

- **South End/Lower Roxbury Youth Workers Alliance**
  - Monthly networking meeting
  - Leadership development
  - Working collaboratively
    - Sharing common approach
    - Building leadership and using common language
    - Advocacy to advance the field
  - 200 youth workers from more than 44 organizations serving young people ages 6 through 21

# Products

- BEST Report
- Examination of the YWA
- Outcomes Report
  - Outcomes for Youth Workers
  - Outcomes for the Youth they serve
- Guide for effective, sustainable youth worker networks

# Methods

- **Interviews, research and literature review**
- **Two groups for evaluation**
  - BEST trained and networked
  - Non-BEST trained and non-networked
- **Surveys, interviews, focus groups, pre/post**
  - Surveys of 286 youth associated 40 youth workers:
  - 125 youth in groups run by *BEST* + SE/LR YWA youth workers completed surveys
  - 161 youth in groups run by non-*BEST* + non-SE/LR YWA youth workers completed surveys.

OUTCOMES FOR  
YOUTH  
WORKERS

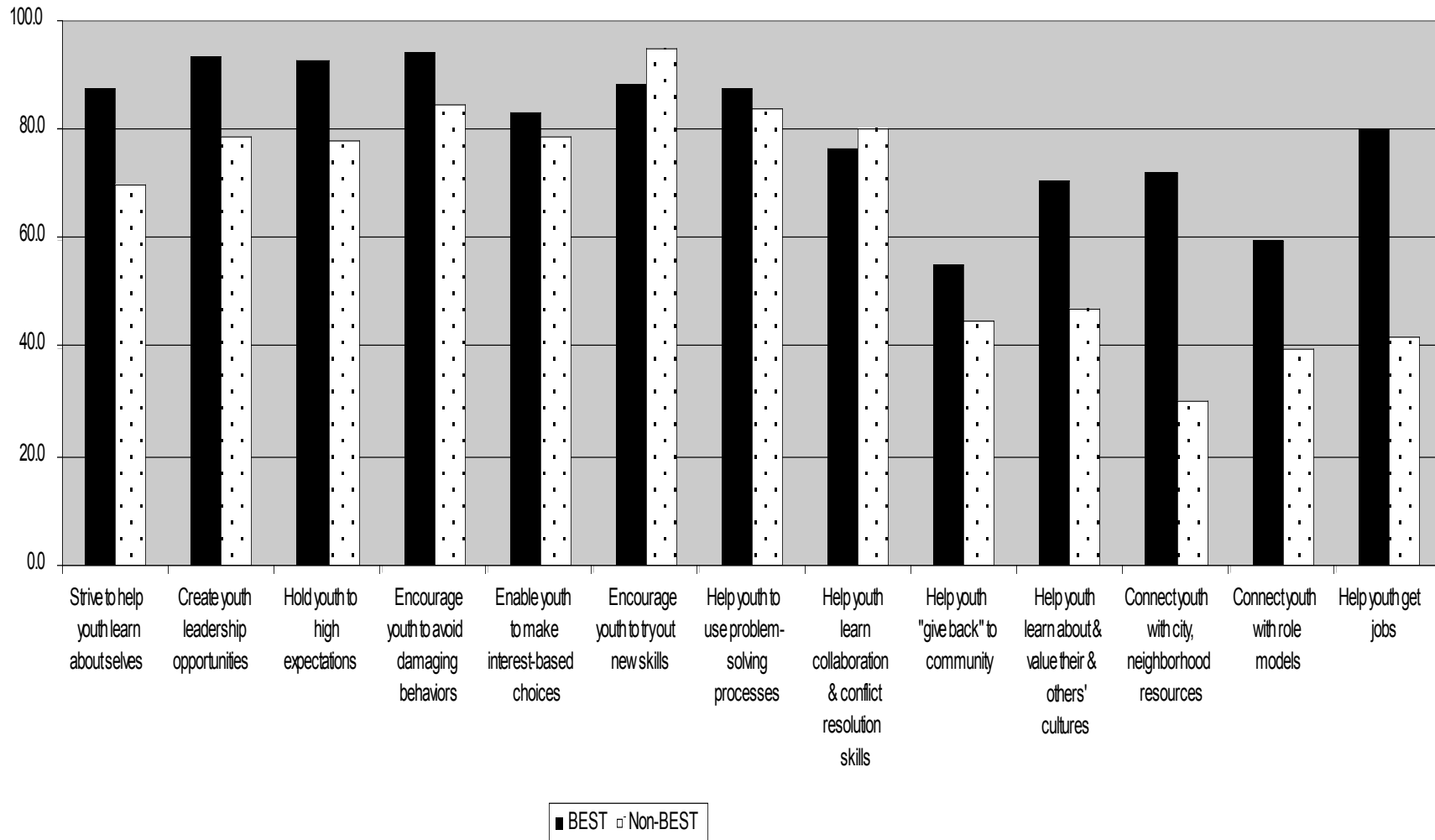
# Trained-networked (TN) vs. non-trained, non-networked (NN)

- TN outpaced NN in most of 13 youth development strategies
- Statistically significant in:
  - Connecting youth with resources in the city or neighborhood that address their wants and needs
  - Helping youth get jobs
- Learned new skills and knowledge of youth development

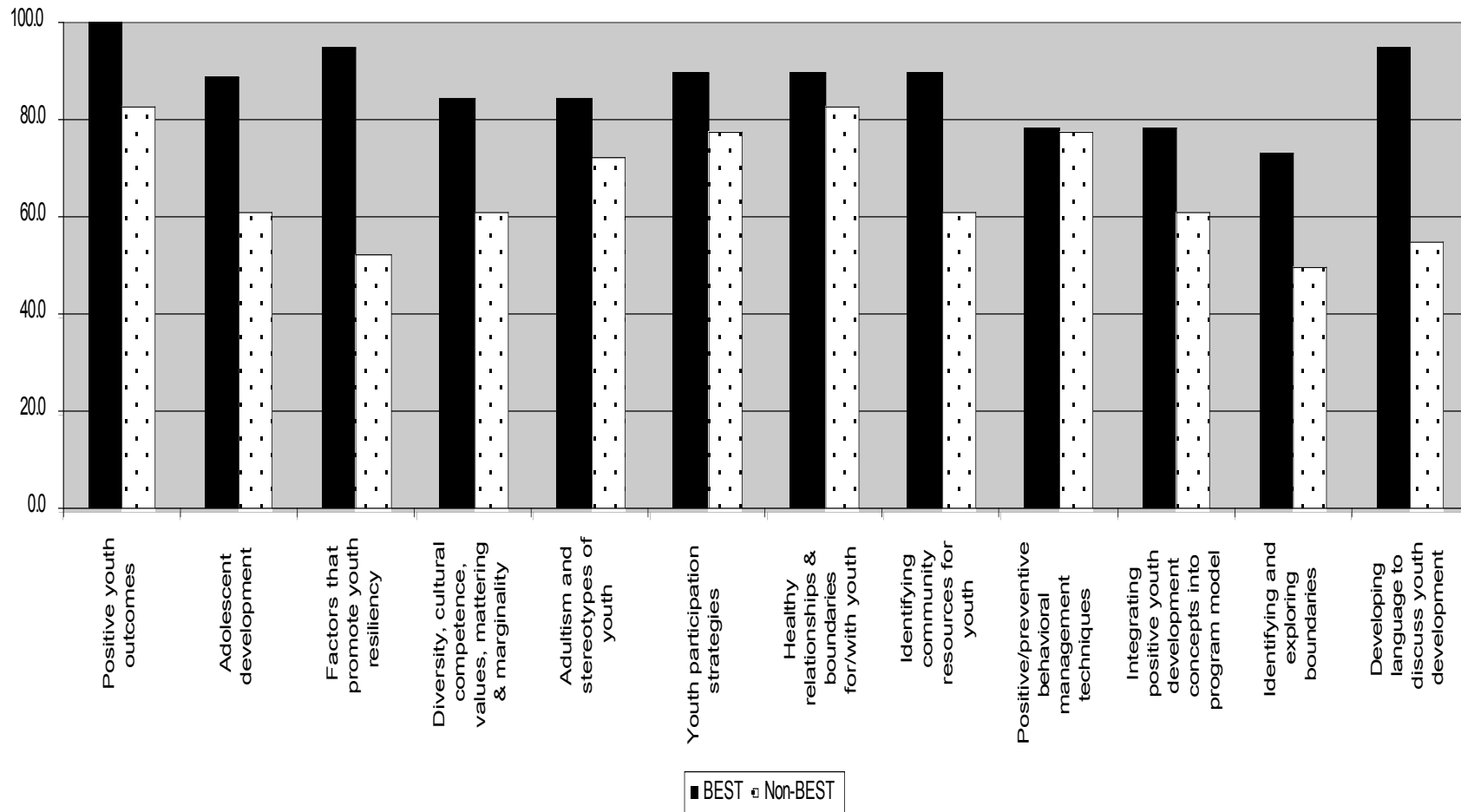
## ❖ USE POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES

- ❖ *BEST* + SE/LR YWA respondents were more likely to use positive youth development approaches regularly in their work with youth than were non-*BEST* + non-SE/LR YWA respondents. The difference was statistically significant for two approaches – **connecting youth with resources in the city or neighborhood that address their wants and needs**, and **helping youth get jobs** – but even when the differences were not statistically significant, in most cases more *BEST* + SE/LR YWA youth workers used positive youth development approaches than did non-*BEST* + non-SE/LR YWA youth workers. Figure 1 compares the two groups' responses to each of the 13 positive youth development approaches. Though most differences were not statistically significant, the pattern of responses is worth noting.

# Positive Youth Development Approaches



# New Skills and Knowledge



# OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

# Observations TN vs. NN

- Youth are engaged.
- Youth are enjoying themselves.
- Youth are involved in challenging activities.
- Youth are reflecting about how their experiences can be transferred to other real-world situations.
- Youth are taking on personal responsibility and exhibiting autonomy.
- Youth are setting goals.
- Youth are managing themselves.
- Youth are making positive, general choices and decisions.
- Youth are planning, organizing, and implementing activities.
- Youth are communicating with others.

# Observations TN vs. NN

- Youth are using/developing social skills, especially with people who are different from one.
- Youth are expressing satisfaction, achievement, competence, etc.
- Youth workers seriously listen to and respect what youth say.
- Youth workers seek youths' input.
- Youth workers offer positive feedback/rewards.
- Youth workers hold youth to high expectations.
- Youth workers work with youth to clarify goals/expectations.
- Youth worker helps youth to understand and use positive problem solving processes.
- Youth workers do not exhibit “adultism” or stereotype youth.

- *Surveys of 286 youth associated with these 40 youth workers: 125 youth in groups run by BEST + SE/LR YWA youth workers completed surveys, and 161 youth in groups run by non-BEST + non-SE/LR YWA youth workers completed surveys.*

# 72 items in 9 categories

- Neighborhood resources and knowledge
- Ability to work with others
- Ability to work out conflicts
- Valuing diversity
- Community engagement
- Youth leadership/youth voice
- Self-efficacy
- Program quality
- Learning skills (school)

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