



Positive peer culture: a resilience-based intervention in adolescent foster home care

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»» To focus on resilience

„We now believe and are setting out to scientifically demonstrate, that our highest goal, namely, to improve the future of all children, is best accomplished by identifying and harnessing their strengths and shaping resilient qualities.“
(Goldstein & Brooks, 2006, xiv)

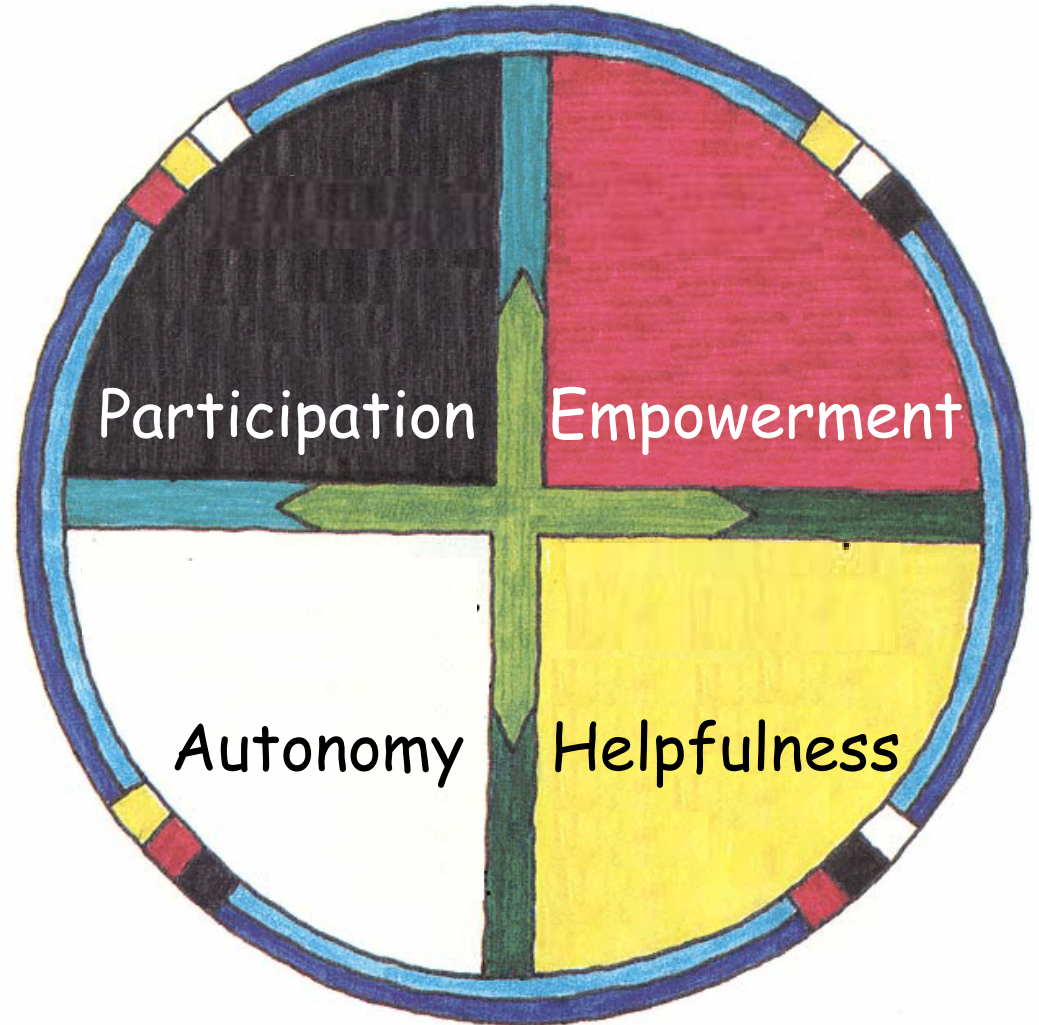




Between needs and concepts: The „Circle of Courage“



Martin Brokenleg





Attitude

PPC: To lead the young people to accept **to be helpful**, **not** to lead them to accept **to be helped**.



Larry Brendtro

"Rather than demand obedience, PPC demands that young people become the mature and productive human beings they can be. Unfortunately, many adults do not really believe that young people possess the quality of 'greatness', which is perhaps not surprising since youth seldom are provided with opportunities to display their true human potential" (Vorrath & Brendtro, 2007, S. 19).

Peer Group meetings

Procedure, moderated by an adult:

- identification of problems based on specific situations,
- decision on which of the young people's problems will be discussed at the meeting,
- factual, complete and chronological description of the situation related to the problem,
- identification of the hurtful behaviour, naming of feelings and flaws in reasoning, and formulation of possible solutions,
- conclusion of process and feedback.





What is special about the PPC peer group meetings?

- Intention: building on strengths
- Values: there is no bad child
- Helpfulness: being able to help
- Homework: mutual support
- Responsibilities: youth is responsible
- Success: Belongs to youth





Augustinusheim in Ettlingen, near Karlsruhe, Germany



- Home for 90-120 male youth (12-20 years old) with different backgrounds, (e.g. sexual offender, homeless...)
- Stationary and ambulatory
- Provider: Non profit organization of welfare services, supported by Caritas Germany
- School for youth with special needs, vocational schools, vocational trainings, learn a trade



Meetings in Augustinusheim



- Twice a week at the same time for all groups.
- One peer group meeting in their living or day group as well as one meeting at their school or training centre.
- Two moderators, educators, social education workers, teachers or trainers sit behind a table while the young people sit in a circle.



Samples from 2003 to 2008

- 7 measurements during four years
- 167 adolescents finished 361 questionnaires
- 24 adolescents took part in 36 interviews
- The adolescents were average 16,25 years old and lived since 18 months in this home
- 40 staff members took part in 71 interviews
- 47 staff members finished questionnaires as well
- Over the different measurements the groups are quite comparable





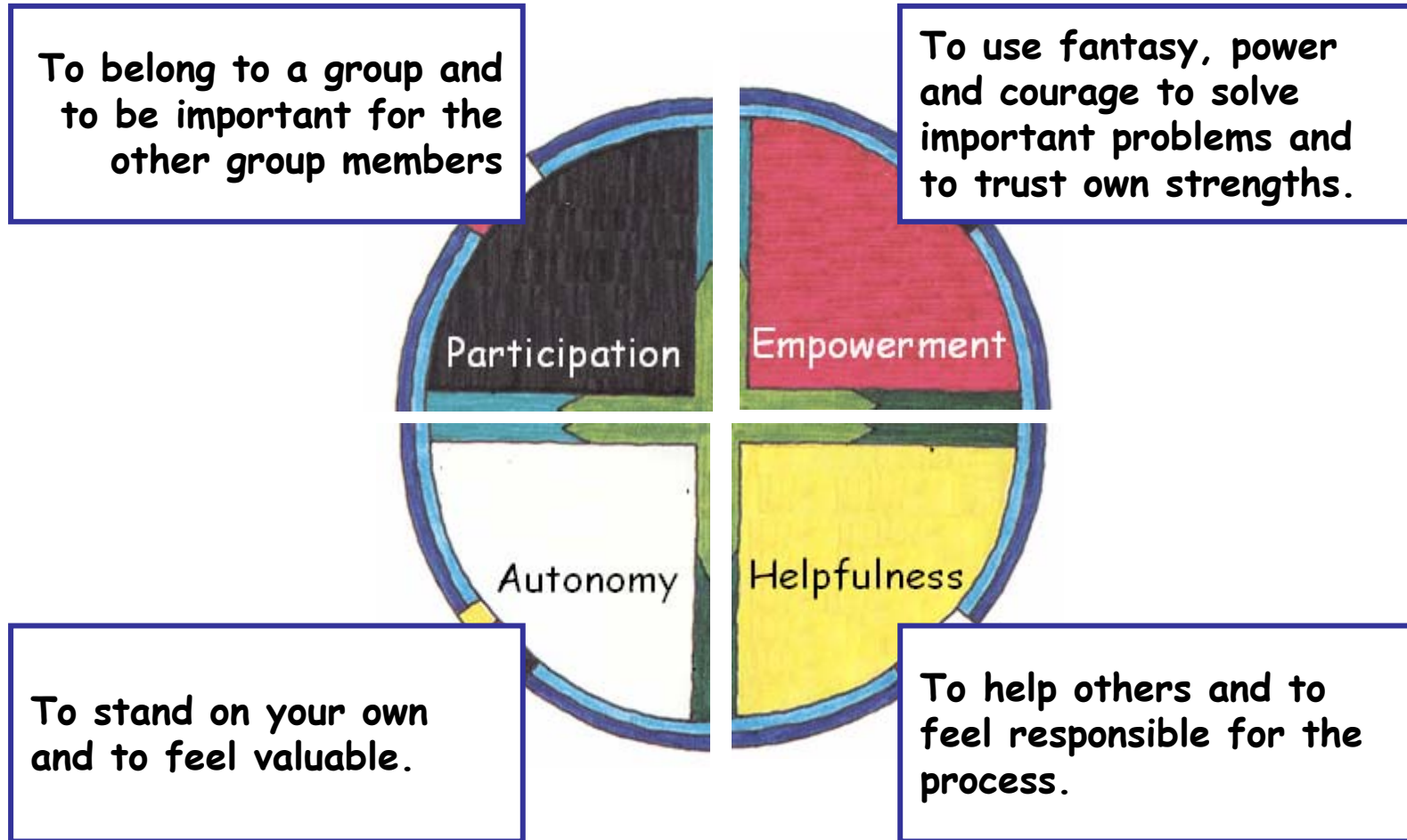
Sections in the questionnaires

Table 1: Measurements and questions

Questions on ...	Spring 2004	Autumn 2004	Spring 2005	Autumn 2005	Spring 2006	Autumn 2006	follow-up Autumn 2008
Age, time spent in the Home	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Group affiliation					✓	✓	
General assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Impact of group meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Questions on the Home	✓					✓	✓
Wishes regarding life in the Home		✓				✓	
Other members of the peer group		✓				✓	
Closeness to and influence on the peer group			✓			✓	
Questions related to self-concept	✓		✓		✓		✓
Values	✓			✓			✓
Desires and objectives				✓		✓	



Results of the evaluation





Effects: The point of view of the staff members

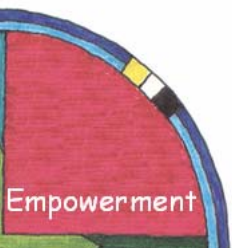
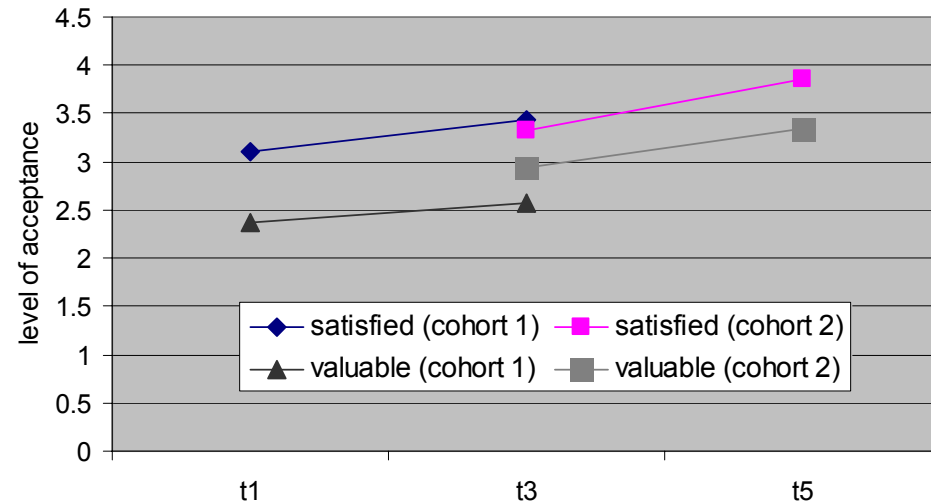
"But – you see this every day, the guys react differently to many things, they don't react consciously, no, we learned that in the peer groups, but you can see that they unconsciously talk more often and tell the other young people stop your shit, we just don't want to hear that any more, yes, they really do that, some of them, no, with many of them nothing is clear, but some have already learned a lot, and they react. Sure, if you ask them if they do that because of the peer group, then they say no, I just needed to do that. We notice these things." (Staff member, t6, 1830-1835)





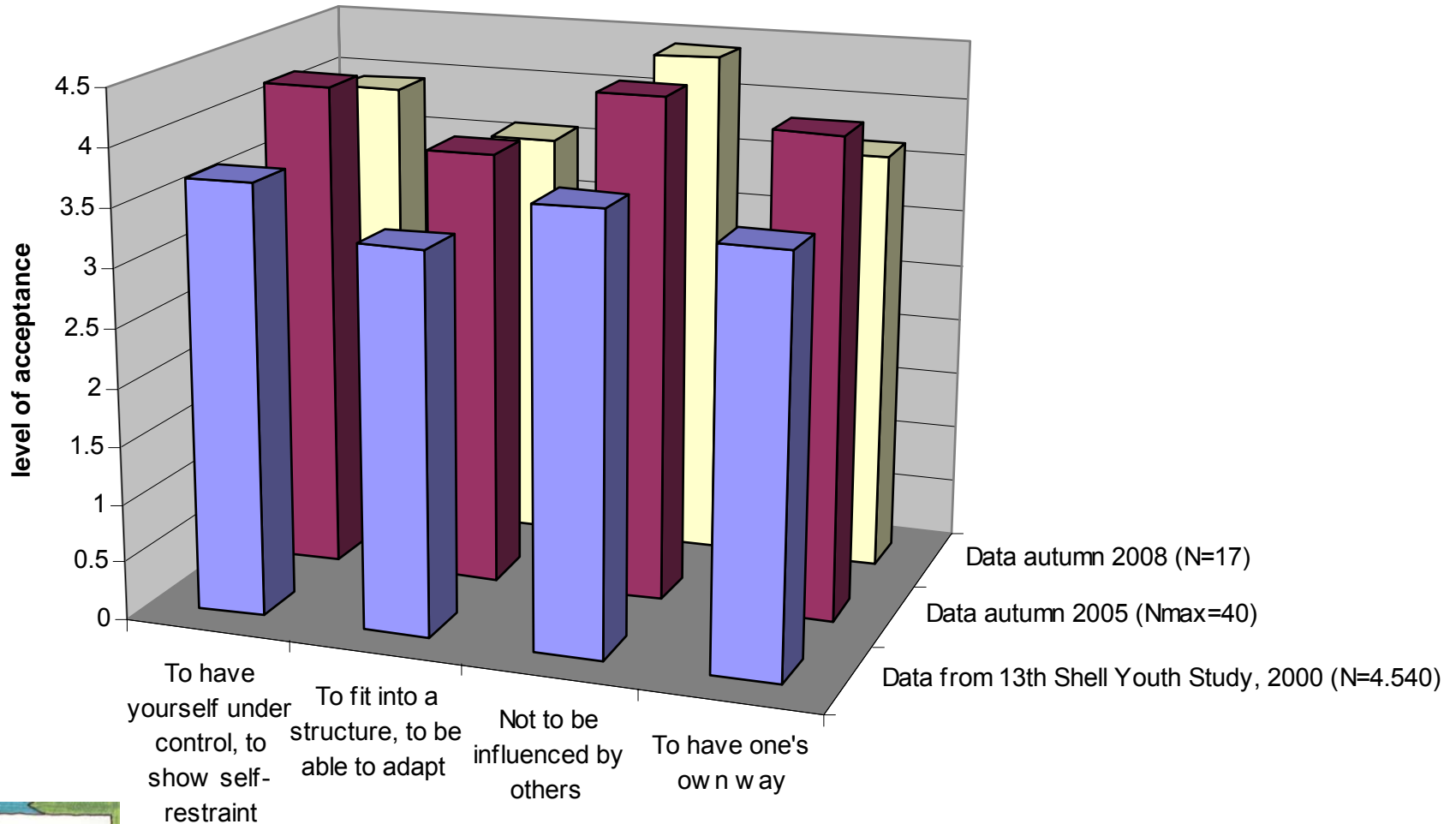
Feeling happy and valuable

- After three years with PPC youth in Augustinusheim Ettlingen are more confident.
- In 2007 youth in Augustinusheim feel more valuable (▲,■) and more happy (◆,■) than
- youth in Augustinusheim in 2003.
- At the end of our evaluation almost all boys are more happy (◆,■) with themselves and
- feel more valuable (▲,■) than in the beginning of their life in Augustinusheim.



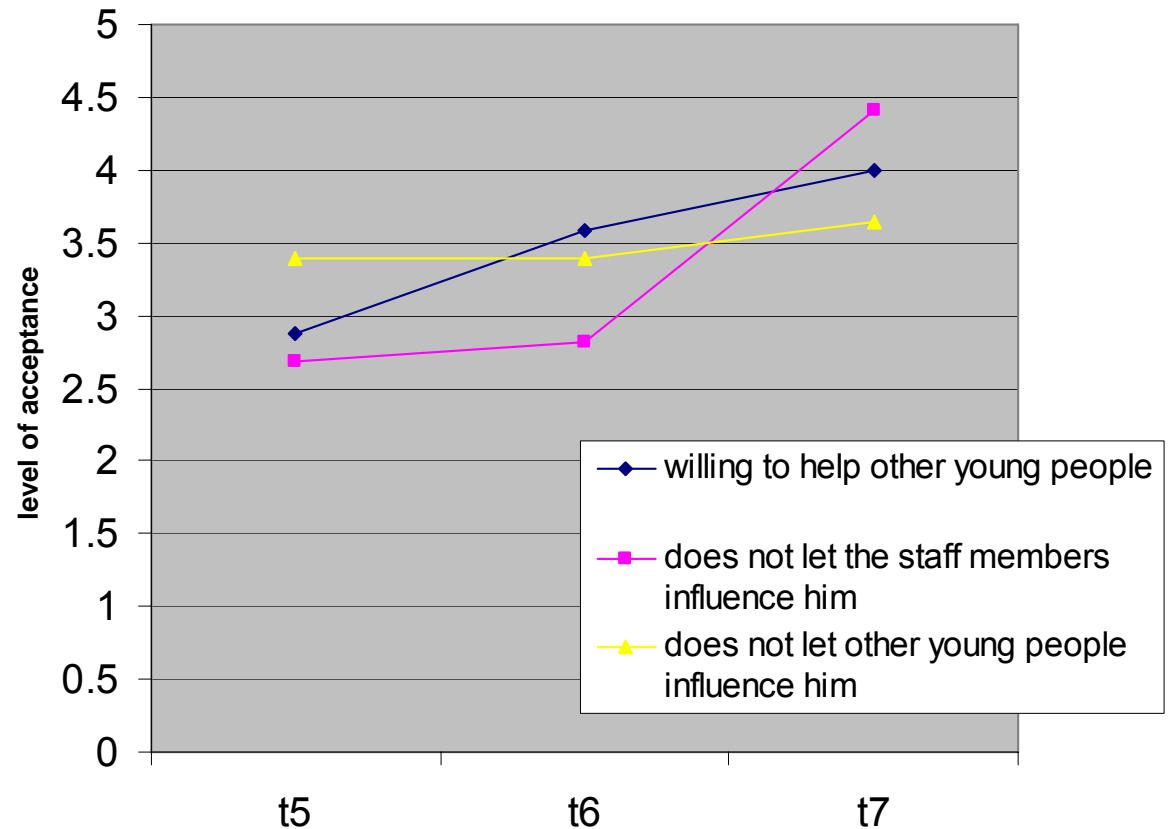


Shell youth panel (2000, n=4.546) vs. boys in PPC-program (autumn 2005, n_{max}=49) and after leaving the institution (autumn 2008, n=17)



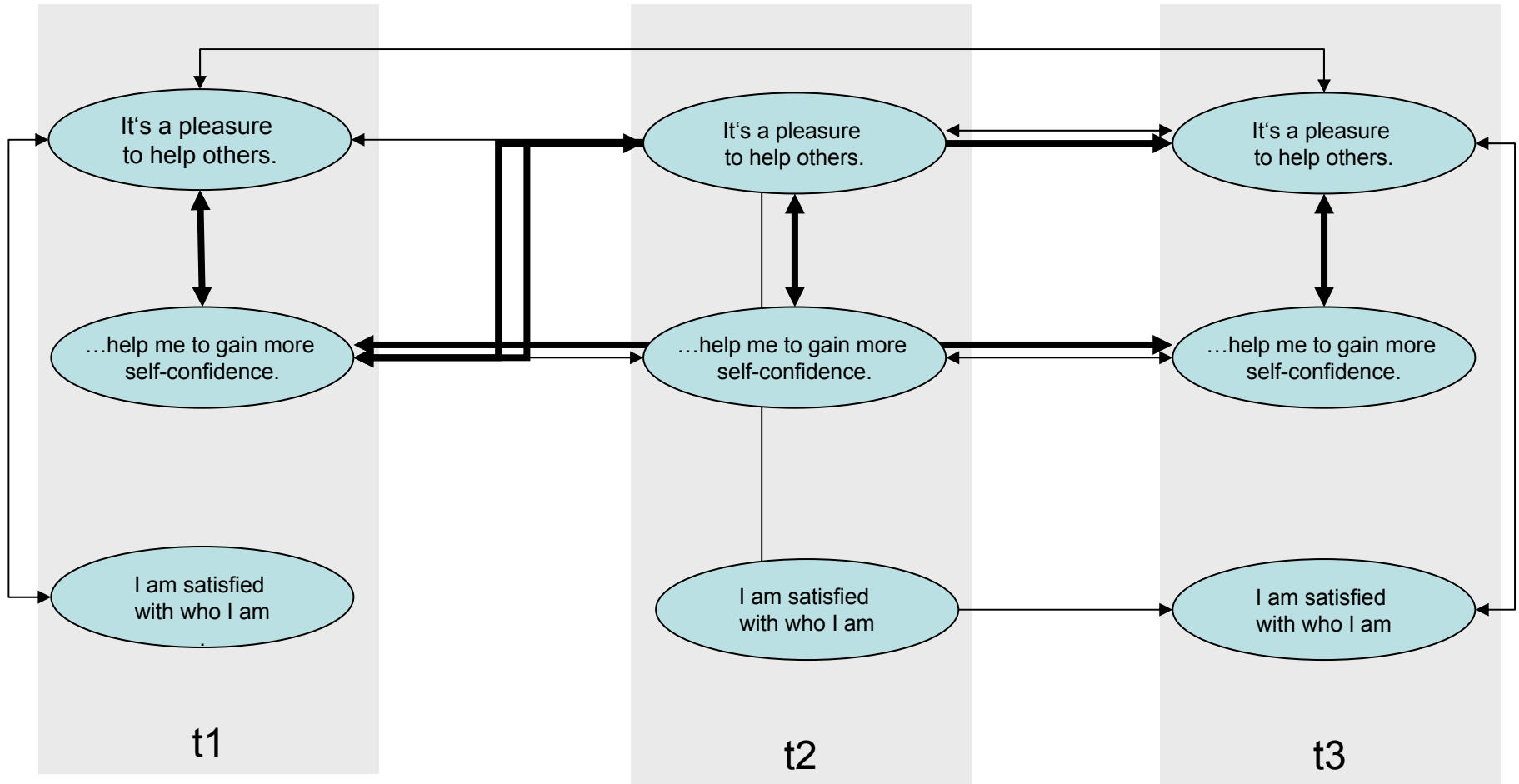
Helpfulness

- „Then somebody knows and thinks, hey come on, we will help him simply - - because with ourselves there is simply, with ourselves there is help in demand in our group, we help our people, yeah.“ (Young person, t6, 22-27)



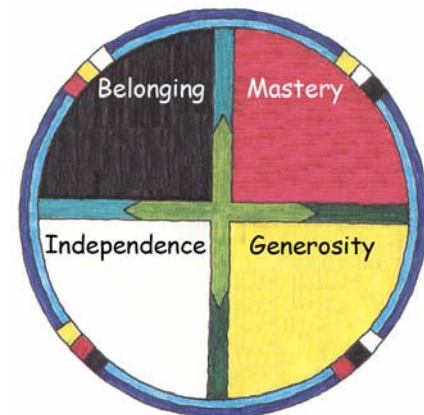


Readiness to help others and self-confidence (17 < n < 61)



Summary

- The circle of courage helps to understand what is important to enhance resilience
- For this helpfulness together with autonomy, empowerment and participation is an important guideline for education
- The evaluation shows that
 - the readiness to help others improves.
 - PPC helps the young people to feel valuable.
 - By enhancing self-confidence PPC makes sustainable change possible.





To focus on resilience

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(Goldstein & Brooks, 2006, xiv)





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