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Human & Social
Development

Research Conversations

Crystal Meth and Adolescent Girls:

The Puzzling Relationship Between Image, Metaphor and Understanding

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Presentation Synopsis:

Increasing numbers of adolescent girls in many cities and rural settings in North America are experimenting with crystal methamphetamine. Parents, communities and society as a whole are alarmed by this development due to the potential for long term negative effects such as cognitive, physical and emotional impairment. To counter this trend, several interventions that consist primarily with delivering expert knowledge and in essence using “scare” tactics to thwart this risky behaviour have not been entirely effective. What has been missing from the literature are in depth studies that rely on youth perspectives on the causes, successful interventions and ideas regarding prevention.

In our study we attempted to gain insights from the girls themselves rather than solely relying on the research literature and/or adult perspectives. Connecting with adolescent girls as academic researchers has its challenges. In order to bridge the gap between ourselves and our participants, we moved from text based strategies to more visual methods, such as digital and computer based images. This presentation will highlight some of the findings and also provide insights about the methodology used.

Marie L. Hoskins, Ph.D. is a professor and graduate advisor in the School of Child and Youth Care in the Faculty of Human and Social Development. Her teaching and research is strongly informed by social constructionist and constructivist theories. As a recipient of several Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Awards (SSHRC), she has been the principal investigator on a variety of research projects including an exploration of adolescents and disordered eating, an inquiry into the shifts in constituting identities while engaged in workplace conflicts, working to alleviate the use of children in armed combat, and an exploration of the co-construction of identities surrounding the use of crystal methamphetamines among adolescent girls.

