

Healthy Participation:
Youth-led Participatory Action Research and Community Health Promotion in West Sacramento

By

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Abstract

As research continues to demonstrate the relationship between powerlessness and poor health, there is growing recognition that marginalized populations who have been disproportionately impacted by inequitable conditions should be active participants in framing, researching and addressing those conditions. Youth, in particular, often face unique challenges and rarely are able to exert much control over key decisions or circumstances that affect their lives. Youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) and the *promotores de salud* community health outreach model are two distinct but complementary approaches that attempt to address this situation by realigning the traditional power relations between researchers, organizations, and young people. This paper examines my work with the Youth Promotores Program, a pilot youth development initiative in West Sacramento working to combine the YPAR and *promotores de salud* approaches. Engaging with participation as a process-oriented political issue, I analyze the opportunities and challenges encountered by this hybrid program model and explore the connections between organizational capacity, program design and implementation, and youth participation and power.

Introduction

Research continues to demonstrate the connections between the social and environmental determinants of health and the unjust experiences of historically disenfranchised and marginalized populations, especially low-income communities of color. (Knox et al. 2005; Ogneva-Himmelberger et al. 2010; Chavez et al. 2008; Wallerstein 1992). This clear link between powerlessness and poor health has helped drive a growing recognition among academics and community development practitioners that communities who have been disproportionately impacted by inequitable conditions should be active participants in framing, researching and addressing those conditions (Israel et al. 2013; Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki 1994; Fine 2008). Youth from these communities, in particular, often face unique challenges and rarely are able to exert much control over key decisions or circumstances that affect their lives (London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein 2003; Cahill 2007; Kirshner 2007; Evans 2007). Youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) and the *promotores de salud* community health outreach model are two distinct but complementary approaches that attempt to address this situation by realigning the traditional power relations between researchers, organizations, and young people.

Through its Youth Promotores Program, the Yolo County Children's Alliance (YCCA) worked to combine YPAR and *promotores* approaches in an initiative with youth in West Sacramento, California. This research documents YCCA's work with eleven students at River City High School over the course of nine months, exploring the development of their program's curriculum and its impact on youth participation and empowerment through a series of facilitated youth meetings and focus groups. What follows is an analysis of the opportunities and challenges presented by this pilot youth development program and its hybrid approach, situated within larger discussions about participation, power, equitable research, and community development.

Health, Participation and Power

At their cores, the *promotores* model and YPAR focus on “empowering disenfranchized [sic] and marginalized groups to take action to transform their lives” (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995, 1671). Unlike traditional, extractive research practices and development initiatives—whose legacies in marginalized communities of color have often led to distrust and disillusionment—both of these participatory approaches value local knowledge and perspectives over claims of objectivity, distance, and top-down expertise (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein 2003; Fine 2008; Israel et al. 2013; Stoecker 2005). In a fast-paced world obsessed with instant gratification, YPAR and *promotores* efforts require appreciating and harnessing the power of slow, steady processes and long-term commitments (Campbell and Erbstein 2012; Kieffer et al. 2013; Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki 1994; Grandia 2015). Both approaches also see participation not simply as a method for achieving better outcomes for individuals and communities, but as a political imperative (Cahill 2007; White 1996).

While they are based on similar foundational principles, these two approaches employ unique strategies and methods. The *promotores de salud* model of community health promotion is a participatory approach to public health outreach that is becoming more widely used by researchers and community-based organizations working with marginalized populations. The foundation for this work was established in the 1970s with the Declaration of Alma-Ata’s emphasis on health for all as a basic human right and the community health work of groups like the Hesperian Foundation (International Conference on Primary Health Care 1978; Hesperian Health Guides 2016). As one response to the extreme levels of inequality in health status and

care found both between and within countries, the *promotores* model arose out of the acknowledgment that “power dynamics permeate most relationships between health educators and community members,” usually to the detriment of community health outcomes (Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki 1994, 117). To combat this reality, *promotores* programs train lay members of the community to be health outreach workers and educators, providing them with the skills and support to promote locally relevant, culturally appropriate, and effective health interventions (Hanni et al. 2009; Cohen and Ingram 2005; Knox et al. 2005). This model recognizes empowerment at both the individual and community level as an effective wellness strategy and promotes multiscalar change (Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki 1994). As noted by Wallerstein (1992), “Participation in decision making, in developing a sense of community, and in gaining control over one’s destiny is itself health-enhancing” (203). Though they share many similarities with participatory action research, *promotores* programs generally have less of a connection with systematic knowledge-generation, direct social action, and community organizing methods.

Like other participatory action research formats, YPAR is focused on relocating the production and use of knowledge to address the traditional power dynamics between researchers and community members (Fine 2008; Wallerstein and Duran 2008; Maguire 2011; Glass and Newman 2015). Research results and knowledge are not treated as satisfactory ends in and of themselves, but rather as means towards an even larger goal: social action that creates transformative change focused on social justice and equity (London 2007; Stoecker 2005). This process is about creating “knowledge for action” (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995, 1667) and entails moving beyond mere “research project[s]” to develop “social change project[s] of which the research is only one piece” (Stoecker 2008, 102). What makes YPAR unique, though, is its specific engagement with young people as key local assets and integral components of successful

community development and social change efforts, rather than simply as suspects, victims or consumers (O'Donoghue and Strobel 2007; London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein 2003; London 2007). As Evans (2007) recognizes, “Too often young people get excluded from matters of community yet are expected to behave in ways that are respectful, caring, and responsible to community” (697). YPAR focuses on youth leadership, civic engagement, skills development, and social justice, and is process-oriented, iterative, and reflexive (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Campbell and Erbstein 2012; Duran et al. 2013). Utilizing these strategies, it creates spaces for research and activism that are driven by youth’s perspectives and strengths, allowing young people to study and address social issues that impact them in ways that build their capacities as civic actors (Ardoin, Castrechini, and Hofstedt 2013; Cammarota and Fine 2008).

Employing a YPAR or *promotores* approach has been shown to offer a number of benefits for youth participants, community development efforts, and the communities in which they operate. In addition to having opportunities to affect significant change in their lives and their communities, youth engaged in participatory projects can develop a number of skills related to research, leadership, academics, relationship-building, professionalism, teamwork, and cultural humility (London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein 2003; Ardoin, Castrechini, and Hofstedt 2013; Mitra 2008; Cahill 2007). Participatory approaches with youth can have substantial impacts on community development efforts by increasing the diversity of perspectives and involved stakeholders; serving a social bridging role that brings others to the table and inspires them to action; and providing crucial opportunities for intergenerational relationship building and collective work (Ardoin, Castrechini, and Hofstedt 2013; Kirshner 2007; O'Donoghue and Strobel 2007; Camino 2000). Due to these substantial benefits, London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein (2003) argue that youth development and community development not only

complement one another but must be practiced in tandem if their goals of long-term, sustainable social change for all are to be fully realized. The communities where these integrated efforts take place are improved through enhanced civic participation from an increasingly diverse range of citizens and a continuum of activism that sees involved youth interact meaningfully with adults and eventually become informed and engaged adults themselves (Jennings et al. 2006; Camino 2005; London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein 2003). These interconnections are highlighted by Jennings et al. (2006), whose research on youth empowerment adds further support to the idea that participatory approaches provide the greatest benefits when young people are not completely segregated and isolated into their own separate endeavors. According to them, “Socially integrating youth in responsible roles with shared power encourages community development that better serves not only the needs of youth, but potentially the needs of all community members” (51).

Use of participatory approaches can also provide important benefits for research efforts. Scholars advocating for improved research ethics and outcomes note participatory research’s potential for greater responsibility, accountability, reciprocity, validity, and epistemic justice (Fine 2008; Grandia 2015; Cahill 2007; Glass and Newman 2015). However, dominant powers within academic institutions often maintain a lack of support for participatory research practices and fail to acknowledge their contributions (Watts, Diemer, and Voight 2011; Wolf 1996; Stoecker 2005). While entrenched interests within the academic community may be at the heart of these particular critiques, there are legitimate concerns regarding participatory practices that must be identified and addressed.

Numerous studies extol the virtues and potential benefits of the YPAR and *promotores* models, but participatory approaches to research, social action, and community development are

not without their potential challenges and pitfalls. Practitioners looking to implement these types of initiatives need to acknowledge the historical reality and continuing threat of astroturfing (the creation of artificial grassroots activities with the veneer of popular movements that are really sponsored by corporations or other powerful interests), cooptation, manipulation, and the concealment and reproduction of traditional power dynamics connected to participatory practices, particularly in the development field (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Rahnema 2010; Cahill 2007; Wallerstein 1992; Stoecker 2005; Mitra 2008; White 1996; Leal 2007; Arnstein 1969). While enhanced community participation is often framed as an inherent good and a radical challenge to dominant power, it may just mask tokenism or exploitation meant to serve the status quo. As Stoecker (2005) warns, “Governments and corporations have also become very sophisticated at the rhetoric of participation” (36). In the United States, manipulation masquerading as participation was evident throughout the urban renewal programs of the twentieth century, when Citizen Advisory Committees were really just rubberstamps for the interests of city housing officials (Arnstein 1969). Leal (2007) argues that participation has not simply been depoliticized by the global establishment but was actually re-politicized during the era of Structural Adjustment Programs in order to “justify, legitimize, and perpetuate current neo-liberal hegemony” (544). According to his analysis, by emphasizing control through “incorporation, rather than exclusion” as noted by White (1996, 7), the radical *concientización* and liberation promoted by Freire (1970) and popular outrage over the global actions of the World Bank and the IMF were channeled and coopted to become a form of “empowerment” that simply meant participation in the free-market global economy.

Even progressive practitioners struggling in clear opposition to these global and domestic power dynamics must be aware of how power operates within their own participatory efforts.

Although one of the goals of participatory approaches may be increased power sharing and equity, this does not completely eliminate power imbalances that may exist between program facilitators and community participants. It is naïve to assume that participants' publically expressed motives and behaviors are always authentic and their involvement, consent and opinions are never coerced (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Chavez et al. 2008; Scott 1990). White (1996) makes this point very clear when she writes, "Participation may take place for a whole range of unfree reasons" (14). Those running participatory programs are not necessarily immune from these concerns either. "Impression management in power-laden situations" is a reality that also can constrain the full expression of program facilitators and community development practitioners who feel they must conform to a certain public role and hierarchy (Scott 1990, 3).

In pursuing participatory work that seeks to rectify traditional power imbalances in research and community engagement, it is also important to recognize that power relations and issues of race, gender, privilege and access are present within communities and among potential program participants as well (Kress 2006; Evans 2007; Erbstein 2013; Chavez et al. 2008; Campbell and Erbstein 2012; Maguire 2011). Rather than expanding the base of power, participatory approaches have the potential to just place control in the hands of local elites, and those working with youth are not immune from this danger (Mitra 2008; Wallerstein and Duran 2008). Libby et al. (2006) make this point clear: "Just as in adult society, [youth] access to power occurs through the filters of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. These factors often influence which youth are already succeeding within the systems, and it is these youth who have traditionally been sought as leaders" (22). Having youth at the table and making decisions does not automatically resolve concerns related to power, equity, and representation.

So what is a conscientious practitioner concerned about persistent power dynamics in research, social action, and community development to do? How is one to balance along this precipitous edge, unlocking the abundant potential benefits of participatory practices while avoiding its many dangerous pitfalls? For Cahill (2007), the key is to distinguish between participation as a method and participation as an approach. While participation as a method is a purely outcome-oriented stance that views community engagement as a technical problem, understanding participatory practices as an approach entails reengaging with participation as a political issue (White 1996). “To reconstitute participation as an instrument for promoting social transformation” (Leal 2007, 546) requires focusing on the process as well as practitioners’ attitudes (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). “Participation should not be seen as a magic bullet but as a complex and iterative process” where power dynamics at multiple levels play a central role (Wallerstein and Duran 2008, 35).

As Evans (2007) cautions, “Youth development approaches that neglect the powerful effects of oppressive social conditions risk setting teens up for disappointment” (Evans 2007). Beyond simply disappointment and failed projects, though, the omission of a critical understanding of and engagement with power in participatory work can lead to dire consequences for young people and their communities who continue to suffer under current conditions. This highlights the importance of learning to understand, navigate and affect the sociopolitical environment and systems of power and oppression for both participants and practitioners (Gullan, Power, and Leff 2013; Wallerstein and Duran 2008; Chavez et al. 2008).

In pursuit of what Cooke (2004) calls “non-delusional participatory activity,” the following exploration of a youth initiative in West Sacramento documents and analyzes one group’s attempts to negotiate the opportunities and challenges presented by the politicized

participatory practices of YPAR and the *promotores de salud* community health outreach model. The aim, as Cahill (2007) puts it, is to “articulate more clearly what we mean by youth participation in collaborative research and to specify the degrees of participation in our practice” (299) through an investigation of the power dynamics and praxis of the Youth Promotores Program.

Positionality and Multiple Perspectives

Acknowledging one’s own positionality and perspective is a key step in the power analysis and deconstruction of a participatory approach. This process entails recognizing how “seeing and knowing grow out of our specific experiences, situationally complex and shaped by our many multifaceted identities” (Maguire 2011, 97) and understanding how our specific manner of seeing and knowing then “inform[s] our ability to interpret the world, both in understanding the problems and in visioning community strengths” (Wallerstein and Duran 2008, 44). Like Wolf (1996), I see positionality as relational rather than fixed, and advocate moving beyond a simplistic binary of insiders and outsiders to “think in terms of multiple perspectives and mobile subjectivities, of forging collaborations and alliances and juxtaposing different viewpoints” (15).

Regarding my positionality, I can no longer be considered a youth, and I have never been a resident of West Sacramento. I grew up in a middle-class, suburban household across the river from our program site in neighboring Sacramento. Although three of my grandparents and one of my parents were born outside of the United States and I identify as biracial and multiethnic, I benefited from a great deal of privilege: both of my parents graduated from college and held professional positions, we were always adequately housed and well fed, and I also benefited

from being a cis-gendered, able-bodied, heterosexual male in a society that privileges all of those identities. However, I came to this work as a social justice-focused community development practitioner with a decade of prior field experience. My own process of critical consciousness development began as a student of history at the University of California, Berkeley studying the CIA-backed 1954 coup in Guatemala amidst the launch of the War on Terrorism and continued through collaborative work with Nicaraguan subsistence farmers, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, affordable housing residents, and indigenous Guatemalan activists. In particular, my background in community organizing and youth development informed my approach to this work and its inherent power relations. All of these factors worked in conjunction with my relationships with the youth participants, adult allies, and partner organizations to create the lens through which I participated in and analyzed the Youth Promotores Program.

Combining Community Health Promotion and YPAR in West Sacramento

Project Background

The Yolo County Children's Alliance (YCCA) was established by the County Board of Supervisors in 2002 and operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and an inter-agency collaborative. Its mission is to “assess, coordinate and act to strengthen and support the continuum of prevention and intervention services and resources for children, youth and their families” (Yolo County Children's Alliance 2013). To accomplish this mission, YCCA focuses on service provision, research, and advocacy, working to support some of Yolo County's most marginalized populations. Although it is headquartered in Davis, California, a great deal of its community work takes place in the neighboring city of West Sacramento, where it maintains a Family Resource Center in the Bryte and Broderick neighborhood. As a central location for

resource referrals, capacity-building workshops, and basic services, the Family Resource Center is one of their key points of contact with the community and is well situated in the older, more resource-poor, northern part of town along the Sacramento River.

A quick examination of some of West Sacramento's key statistics demonstrates the great need and varied concerns that YCCA is attempting to address there. According to the United States Census Bureau, over a quarter of the city's 48,744 inhabitants are under the age of eighteen and almost one third of families with children are single-parent households (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Only 26% of Hispanic public high school graduates in West Sacramento's lone school district have completed the requirements to attend a four-year university, compared with 37% of non-Hispanic White students (UC Davis Center for Regional Change 2014). Over one fifth of West Sacramento's population is foreign born, over a third speak a language other than English at home, three quarters of city residents aged twenty-five and older do not have a bachelor's degree, and one fifth of the population lives in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Additionally, Yolo County "holds the unenviable distinction of having the lowest share of property taxes of any county in the state" which, when combined with its rapidly growing population, has resulted in "a more limited public infrastructure for providing services to taxpayers than [sic] other jurisdictions in California" (Yolo County Children's Alliance 2013). It is within this community context that YCCA works to address issues and service needs impacting children and their families through a variety of approaches.

The Youth Promotores Program was not YCCA's first foray into community health promotion work with the families it serves. It was through their work with a West Sacramento *promotores* program for adults that the organization initially recognized the potential power of this model to simultaneously build local leadership capacity and promote positive health

outcomes among some of the community's most marginalized populations. The success of that original program clarified the need for a similar initiative focused on youth, a key demographic of disenfranchised community members. Recognizing the distinct health concerns and perspectives of young people, YCCA decided to introduce a pilot program specifically designed to promote youth leadership development, empowerment and positive health outcomes. After securing a year's worth of seed funding from The California Endowment and the California Family Resource Association, the Youth Promotores Program was born.

YCCA launched the Youth Promotores Program in the fall of 2014 to train students at River City High School in West Sacramento to be community health promoters. A YCCA staff member worked with a team of ten youth participants to situate them as voices for change in the city and mobilize in response to a diverse range of community health issues. These youth *promotores* became civically engaged, connecting with the mayor, County and City representatives, and community institutions. Participants advocated for youth center after-school programming, raised awareness about CalFresh and Medi-Cal access, and conducted health outreach to over 2,000 students and other community members (Sherman 2015). However, despite these successful endeavors, the group struggled with uneven participant commitment levels and an overall lack of programmatic focus according to youth participants and YCCA's coordinator for the program. As one youth succinctly noted, "Last year was pretty disorganized."

Entering the current programmatic year with the desire for a tighter focus and greater impact, YCCA hoped to combine its initial *promotores* framework with a stronger emphasis on participatory research and action that could influence local health-related policies. By synthesizing these approaches, the organization aimed to develop a youth-driven health outreach and action model focused on process as well as outcomes that could engage young people in

local policy initiatives. The ultimate goal of the program was to work to address the immediate health concerns of some of the community's most marginalized and disenfranchised populations by members of those populations themselves while also developing current and future leaders within Yolo County. YCCA also hoped to develop the Youth Promotores Program and its new hybrid curriculum in order to scale it up statewide through the extensive network of the California Family Resource Association.

The unique strategy that YCCA looked to adopt with young people during the second year of its Youth Promotores Program resembles in many ways the “empowerment education” model proposed by Wallerstein (1992). This model also aims to create a bridge between individual behavior change and “group efforts for social change” within the realm of public health (Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki 1994, 107). Through reflection, critical consciousness-raising, and collective action, empowerment education utilizes the connections between power, powerlessness, and health to promote individual and community wellbeing. As described by Wallerstein, “An empowerment education approach would always engage people through a group dialogue process in identifying their problems; in critically assessing the social, historical, and cultural roots of their problems; and in developing action strategies to change their personal and social lives” (1992, 203). This is very similar to what YCCA hoped to establish by combining the community health outreach model of its inaugural year with a YPAR approach.

Participants and Partners

The Youth Promotores Program began its second programmatic year in the fall of 2015, this time working with eleven West Sacramento youth from River City High School. The program's first cohort was identified through an adult-driven recruitment campaign led by

YCCA and key school staff members. This brought together a diverse group of youth participants, but the program struggled with issues related to uneven commitment levels and follow-through. In the words of one of the youth *promotores*, “Last year, a lot of them were really good students but they had other things to do so they couldn’t show up a lot.” As a result, this year’s recruitment strategy was very much youth-driven, with one of the two returning youth participants taking charge of the entire process to find colleagues who would be fully committed to the program. This led to a youth cohort that demonstrated a higher level of engagement and cohesion than the previous one; however, most of the participants came from the same tight-knit group of friends and were already known to one another. Acknowledging that fact, one youth participant stated, “We were all already kind of friends beforehand, so that made the group better. That way we knew what was going on.” While this may have aided with early group dynamics and cohesion, it also may have led to a missed opportunity for greater social bridging and relationship building.

Despite largely coming from the same social network, this year’s group of youth *promotores* still displayed a high level of diversity across many intersectional social identities. The eleven-member cohort was primarily composed of high school seniors and had nine female members and two males. The racial and ethnic breakdown for the group somewhat mirrored the overall demographics of the city, with five Latino *promotores*, four non-Latino Whites, and two Middle Easterners. According to census data from 2010, West Sacramento is mostly split between those who identify ethnically as Hispanic or Latino (31.4%) and those who identify as non-Hispanic and non-Latino White (47.4%). Beyond those two primary groups, 11.2% of West Sacramentans are Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; 4.5% are Black or African American; 0.8% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 4.5% are multiracial; and 0.2% self-

categorize as “Some Other Race” (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). A majority of the youth came from immigrant and/or non-English-speaking households and at least a few of them had experiences dealing with homelessness and substandard or inadequate housing. While most of the participants lived in the more resource-poor neighborhoods in the north of town near the YCCA Family Resource Center, about a quarter of the youth lived in the affluent Southport section located south of the city’s Deep Water Ship Channel. While issues with recruitment, representation, and access did exist in the Youth Promotores Program—and are discussed in further detail later in this paper—the initiative still managed to bring together young people across a wide range of key vulnerable youth demographics (Erbstein 2013). The diversity of the cohort’s members and their positionality was a clear strength of the program and allowed youth to “[build] alliances across difference” (Chavez et al. 2008, 82).

Without any dedicated funding for the program’s second year, YCCA reached out to the Center for Regional Change at the University of California, Davis (CRC) for assistance. The Youth Promotores Program restarted at the beginning of this current school year with the same YCCA staff person who ran it the first time and with the additional support of two AmeriCorps volunteers from the West Sacramento Family Resource Center. However, program staff lacked the training and expertise to fully incorporate a YPAR approach into their community health promotion model through the design and facilitation of a focused, hybrid curriculum.

To help it realize its programmatic goals, CRC helped broker my collaboration with YCCA, and I was brought on as an additional member of their adult ally team in November of 2015. YCCA sought an outside consultant with experience in organizing and youth development, and I sought a participatory research opportunity for my master’s thesis, so the partnership was a good match. As Stoecker (2005) notes in his exploration of participatory action research

methodology, “Researchers get involved at different points in a project cycle” (31). I joined the process after the youth cohort was formed and had conducted a couple introductory and team-building meetings but before much else had been done. CRC staff and I were initially under the impression that I would be assisting a fully-formed program, providing training, planning and research assistance to both the youth participants and adult allies in order to support their community health initiatives and collective capacity building as they pivoted towards policy-focused work. It soon became clear, though, that the program was not as robust as we had originally thought it to be, and its overall design and curriculum had not been fleshed out. Having already made a commitment to a new cohort of enthusiastic young people but without any dedicated funding to support much-needed staff time and training, YCCA did not have the capacity to sustain its lofty goals for the program. As a result, my de facto role quickly shifted from that of a supporting outside researcher to encompass fully designing and leading the program’s curriculum.

In order to help build YCCA’s capacity and institutional knowledge as originally intended by our partnership, I slowly shifted myself back out of this role and was able to assume more of a train-the-trainer position with one of the AmeriCorps volunteers during the second half of the program. Finalizing these relationships through a memorandum of understanding occurred a bit late in the process—in February, after my fifth meeting with the group—but was a key step. Through the course of these negotiations, youth were heavily involved in defining their own roles and responsibilities and also participated in discussions concerning my role as a graduate researcher. Eventually, I ended up co-designing and co-facilitating the remaining eight meetings with the AmeriCorps volunteer while analyzing and documenting all of the year’s activities.

Program Design and Process

Over the course of nine months, the eleven youth *promotores* and the group's adult allies met sixteen times, primarily on the high school's campus. Meetings lasted one-and-a-half to two hours after school and generally occurred once every other week. Agenda planning meetings involving all or some of the adult allies usually took place the week before the youth meetings at the YCCA Family Resource Center in West Sacramento. The curriculum developed by the adult ally team emphasized relationship building, co-learning, leadership development, and power sharing among youth and adults. Following the critical distinction identified by Cahill (2007), participation was not simply one of the methods, but was meant to define the program's entire approach.

The primary issue explored by the youth was homelessness in West Sacramento. Lack of community involvement, particularly around the homelessness issue, was also identified by participants as a key concern. In writing about positionality and group dynamics in research, Cahill (2004) notes, "A research process that is collaborative has to take into account difference, this means different perspectives, and then it has to grapple with the spaces between the different standpoints" (283). The most apparent and significant standpoints for the youth *promotores* were related to the locations where each of them lived. According to one youth, "Since we all live in different areas we got the chance to share and see our different thoughts and what we believed in. And, in that way, it helped us." As is often the case in communities, neighborhoods served as key personal markers and identifiers for program participants, and the north-south division within West Sacramento played a prominent role in discussions throughout the year. Both the homelessness and community involvement issues were primarily situated in, and had the greatest impact on, the Bryte and Broderick area where a majority of the youth *promotores* lived.

Participants were especially interested in the city's lack of sufficient homeless shelters and in the safety and health concerns created for all community members with so many individuals and families living on the streets.

Identifying these issues and developing a research agenda and action plan to address them involved guiding the youth *promotores* through a series of activities and discussions designed to promote process as well as outcomes. It also involved implementing a continuous cycle of planning, action and reflection. According to Long et al. (2008), "Informal and non-formal training methods, such as role-playing and group problem solving, are often more effective than conventional lecture-based teaching" (230). Our team found this to be true as well, utilizing dynamic methods like community mapping, theatrical skits, role playing, guided pair discussions, free-writing exercises, research meetings, online mapping tools, research products from a previous YPAR initiative, focus groups, dot voting, and energizers to facilitate relationship building and group interaction while working our way through the steps of a YPAR project.

Throughout this process, each phase was generally planned and facilitated by the adult allies but driven by youth participants' knowledge, experiences, and decisions. By not entering the process with pre-determined issues or goals in mind, the adults were able to meet the young people where they were and allow them to determine the direction of the program (Minkler and Hancock 2008). Essentially the adult allies designed the overall framework for the agendas, exercises, and discussions, but the youth provided the actual substance to breathe life and meaning into it. In an attempt to share more power and provide further opportunities for training and skill development, the adult allies helped participants identify youth leadership roles and responsibilities—facilitator, note taker, timekeeper, energizer, and communicator—and

distribute themselves among them. While youth effectively took charge leading some tasks—such as planning and facilitating energizers, recording discussion input, keeping the group on task, developing online outreach tools, contacting community members, and conducting interviews and research meetings—the adult allies still largely made the decisions regarding agenda creation and program strategizing outside of meetings and facilitated most of the agenda items during meetings. Attempts by the adult allies to further shift these roles and power arrangements were not successful, as discussed in further detail in the following section.

Although the goal at the start of the year was to complete a full YPAR cycle of research, action, and evaluation with the youth *promotores*, it soon became clear that this would not be feasible due to the group's limited meeting schedule and timeframe. During my six months with the program, participants only met fourteen times for a total of twenty-four collective hours (see Figure 1). Unfortunately, efforts to meet with youth outside of regularly scheduled bi-weekly gatherings to make additional progress on project tasks were not fruitful. Despite these significant time constraints, though, participants successfully worked through the steps to identify and prioritize issues, define their research questions, and set a research agenda. They conducted a few research meetings and interviews with key community informants and started to create a survey to conduct with people dealing with homelessness in their community, so they were partially able to design their research tools and collect and analyze some data. However, they did not complete the bulk of their research agenda, and they were still a ways away from disseminating any results and planning and taking action. While the stated intention of YCCA and the youth is to continue this work next year with the four returning *promotores* and new cohort members, the majority of this year's participants will miss out on critical aspects of the

YPAR process and the program moving forward will miss out on their knowledge and contributions.

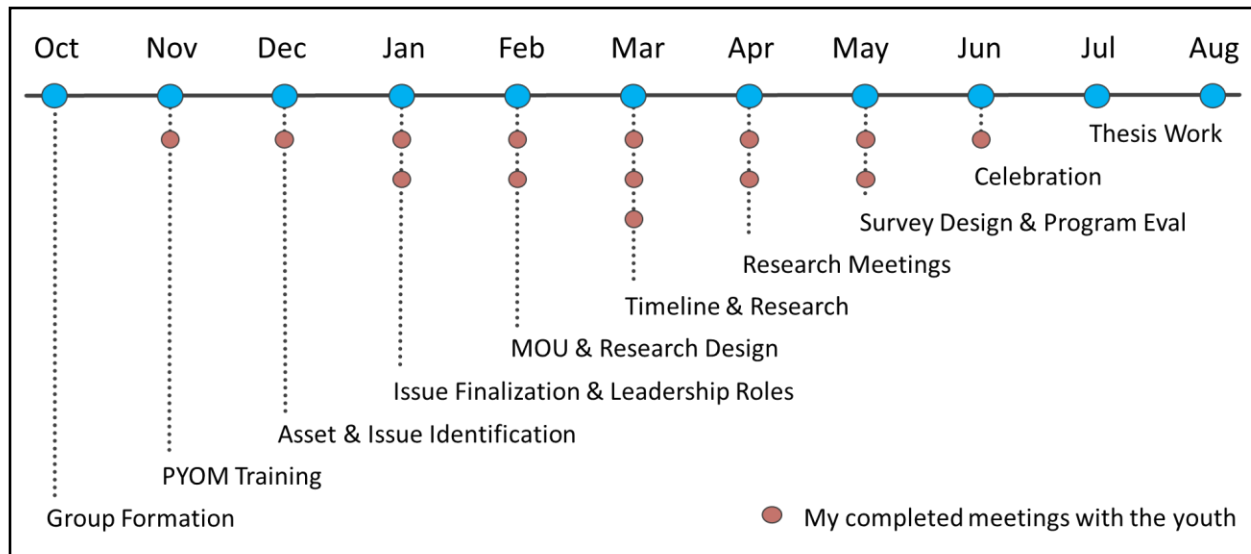


Figure 1: Timeline detailing my involvement with the program

Methods

My analysis and evaluation of this program occurred primarily through my own participation as a co-designer and co-facilitator of the entire process. Meetings and phone conversations were conducted with other members of the adult ally team after every youth meeting in order to debrief the events and activities and critically reflect on our praxis. This allowed us to continually evaluate our progress at every step of the process, compile a running list of lessons learned, and strategize next steps. To add outside perspectives to my analytical work, I participated in debriefing sessions with key CRC staff members on a regular basis throughout the course of the program as well. These sessions allowed me to share my ongoing thoughts about the opportunities and challenges of the program and process them with the help of a team of individuals supporting youth development and YPAR initiatives across California. To complement these discussions, my personal practice of reflection involved taking extensive

fieldnotes after every youth meeting, conversation, and debrief session. I also did some analysis midway through the program during the winter quarter of 2016, when I took a participatory action research course taught by Professor Heidi Ballard in the UC Davis School of Education. All of these venues served as critical sources for ongoing reflection and support.

To include youth voices and perspectives within this process, continual evaluation and reflection was instituted early on as an important group norm for the youth *promotores* as well. A simple plus/delta evaluation format was used with participants at the end of most meetings and after key events and activities to elicit programmatic feedback and allow them to think critically about their contributions and the work they were engaged in. This exercise used a basic chart with two columns—marked “plus” (+) and “delta” (Δ)—and had participants reflect on positive aspects of each event or activity and things they would have liked to change. Additionally, I designed and facilitated a debriefing and evaluation focus group with the youth at the end of the program focused on collective reflection and dialogue related to their overall experiences as *promotores*. During this session, the seven youth in attendance provided valuable feedback on program design, activities, objectives, and accomplishments with a specific emphasis on the participatory nature of the program, adult-youth power dynamics, and power sharing. Afterward I transcribed the entire discussion and all of the youth quotes interspersed throughout this paper come from that meeting.

Overall, individual and collective evaluation methods were utilized extensively throughout the course of the Youth Promotores Program, involving those who were directly connected to the program as well as outside observers with experience in participatory approaches. The results of all of these analytical formats and discussions are synthesized and presented in the following section.

Findings

“I thought this year was gonna be like last year all over again, to be honest...But, yeah, I’d say my expectations were wrong. Which was good. Yeah, we were able to focus ourselves to a common goal. We were able to decide what the club was gonna be about and how we were gonna do it so, yeah, I’m happy that my expectations were wrong.” This quote from one of the youth members highlights some of the progress made by the Youth Promotores Program during the current programmatic year. Through all of the various analyses and evaluations performed during and after the initiative, it is clear that the group achieved significant objectives and provided a positive overall experience for participants. However, the program also faced its share of challenges and setbacks, and a number of barriers prevented it from reaching its full potential. In order to explore these successes and shortcomings in greater detail, the following evaluation results and analyses have been organized into two overarching categories: Program Design and Implementation; and Participation and Power Sharing.

Program Design and Implementation

The partners involved in the Youth Promotores Program created a compelling and innovative program concept with lots of potential that got youth excited and kept them engaged. The level of youth attendance and involvement remained high and consistent throughout the program’s nine months because, as one participant recognized, the program “actually had a plan this year.” The initiative exhibited an intentional focus on relationship building and “creating a safe and caring space,” which kept youth voice from becoming simply tokenism and allowed for critical collective dialogue and reflection (Mitra 2008, 231). As one participant put it, “This

year's group was better in the sense that everybody worked together." During the evaluation session, a number of youth mentioned having the opportunity to meet new people as a valuable aspect of the program. While participating in a gallery walk exercise, one youth wrote, "I liked being able to talk about real community issues with people my own age. I do a lot of community work with people older than me. This was a nice job." Following this year's game plan helped maintain youth voices and concerns in the foreground while providing participants with the space, support and guidance to expand their individual and collective knowledge and capabilities.

While it did not accomplish all of its goals, especially those related to community action and change, this initiative did achieve some important objectives. As one participant noted, "It's only our second year but we still got a lot done this year." In particular, youth engagement and critical consciousness levels were boosted for *promotores* as a result of their involvement in the group. Almost all of the youth in the evaluation session appreciated learning more about their community through their work as *promotores*. Participants also mentioned being more involved in the community as a key outcome. In the words of one of the participants, "I like how we were involved with the community...And I feel that being in this group it helped me look at everything at a different perspective." Youth overwhelmingly highlighted their involvement in two YCCA-sponsored charity events—the Thanksgiving Giveaway and the projectPREVENTION Fashion Show, a fundraiser supporting child abuse prevention programs—as their favorite activities and moments when they felt particularly connected to the community. The Fashion Show, in particular, served as a watershed moment in the growth of participants' critical awareness, showing them how much progress they had made in their development as social justice advocates. During an encounter with a person dealing with homelessness who wandered

into the event, *promotores* exhibited much more compassion for the individual and reacted quite differently than their peers thanks to a more nuanced and critical understanding of the circumstances surrounding homelessness in their community. The program clearly helped youth see beyond prevailing stereotypes and become more knowledgeable about key issues in West Sacramento and provided some opportunities for putting that knowledge into practice.

However, the team faced some significant difficulties trying to implement its unique program concept combining YPAR and *promotores* community health outreach in a context that was not fully organized or resourced to support it. While it is true that the program had a plan this year, unfortunately not all of that plan was fully fleshed out. The initial strategy for concept development was to combine my participatory action research and organizing background with YCCA's community health work and *promotores* experience in order to create a hybrid model. However, YCCA's funding and staffing constraints limited its ability to fully support this process or provide significant guidance or resources related to community health outreach and advocacy. As the main counterpart left to design and facilitate the program's curriculum largely on my own—although with increasing assistance from the AmeriCorps volunteers as the initiative progressed—my YPAR and organizing experience naturally dominated the overall process. Thus, a program curriculum and strategy meant to bring both participatory practices together wound up largely just substituting one approach for the other.

Related to this point, YCCA also struggled to articulate a clear vision for the Youth Promotores Program—with fully developed objectives and intended youth and community outcomes—and define what roles each of the adult allies should play in that process. In examining these types of situations and their consequences, Camino (2005) writes, “A pattern of missteps usually appears to occur when there is lack of consensus among stakeholder groups

regarding the primary purpose of a [youth-adult partnership], and consequently, a lack of clarity of roles among youth and adults” (76). Among the adult ally team, there was some tension and confusion between running the Youth Promotores Program as a relaxed and informal afterschool hangout or a more focused, disciplined, work-oriented research and action project. While YPAR programs should always be fun and enjoyable, Campbell and Erbstein (2012) warn that operating one exclusively as a more traditional after-school group is risky because it can “[divert] staff energy from the broader community change goals and [isolate] youth from adult strategy discussions” (75). Additionally, although the creation of a memorandum of understanding provided some clarity for the various roles and responsibilities of the four adult allies engaged in this work, this occurred quite late in the process and required regular revisiting and negotiation right through to the end of the program year. This overall situation was partially a result of funding and staffing limitations, but also resulted from the lack of clarity regarding the overall vision, format, and objectives of the program.

In addition to suffering from an incomplete program plan, the part of this year’s plan that was fully formulated—essentially the YPAR component—was also only partially realized. As mentioned earlier, youth were not able to make it through all of the steps of a full YPAR project cycle and only completed some components of their research agenda before ending for the summer. The action element of participatory action research is a critical component of the entire approach, and not engaging in community action this year was a major lost opportunity for the youth participants who will not be returning in the fall. Wallerstein and Duran (2008) highlight the importance of this step, writing, “It is only through actions and encountering resistance to social actions that people truly shape their knowledge of how the world works, linking their cognitive intellectual understanding with the visceral and emotional” (42). Along with being a

lost opportunity, only experiencing part of a YPAR program can also pose a risk for the youth involved according to Watts et al. (2011). In their words, “There is a hazard in boosting critical social analysis in young people without raising political efficacy at the same time. An expanded awareness of entrenched social problems without a sense of agency or the organizing skills to set and achieve attainable objectives can lead young people to feel overwhelmed and demoralized” (55). While the youth who participated in the evaluation focus group did not express these types of sentiments or reactions, they certainly recognized the lack of action as a missed opportunity. One youth summarized the feelings of a number of their colleagues when they wrote, “I wish we could have actually interacted with the [homeless] community instead of just talking about it.” This is a valid concern and speaks to the need to see the full process through to its conclusion with the upcoming youth cohort.

Along with staffing and funding issues, time constraints posed a significant challenge that impacted how much the group was able to achieve in its research and action efforts. A limited meeting schedule with youth—and lack of contact with them outside of meetings for training purposes and group work—meant that everything had to be accomplished within just sixteen one-and-a-half to two-hour meetings. We realized early on this schedule would not provide enough time to make it through an entire YPAR project, since participatory work is a long-term process that requires a great deal of time, effort and resources (Campbell and Erbstein 2012; Kieffer et al. 2013; Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki 1994). As Grandia (2015) points out, “Social justice struggles are a marathon, not a sprint” (312). This situation was discussed with youth during multiple program planning activities and decisions were made to set realistic expectations and goals for the year rather than try and force our way through the whole YPAR process. Still,

time constraints played an important role in the progress and development of the program and also had an impact on youth participation and power.

Participation and Power Sharing

The successes and setbacks associated with the Youth Promotores Program's design and implementation were also closely connected to the effort's levels of youth participation and power. As noted previously, the program's overall process was planned and facilitated by the adult allies but driven by youth participants' knowledge, experiences, and decisions. While youth assumed some roles and responsibilities within meetings, it was very difficult to help youth successfully step into more significant facilitation and planning roles without enough dedicated time for adequate training, guidance, and support—particularly outside of regularly scheduled group meetings.

As a former community organizer implementing a participatory action research project that was meant to be youth-led, my goal was to have the youth *promotores* plan and run as much of the program as possible. The old organizing mantra, “Never do for others what they can do for themselves,” was always at the forefront of my mind and epitomized for me a process-oriented approach to the work. Not only did I think a rigid adherence to this approach was best, but I also assumed that the youth would be of a similar mindset and would be critical about the leadership and decision-making roles that were dominated by the adult allies.

I was quite surprised, then, when participants in the evaluation session expressed an overall sense of satisfaction with the level of their power and control and the way collaboration functioned with the adult allies. When asked to rate the amount of control youth had over the program on a scale of zero (no youth control) to ten (completely youth controlled), participants

all fell within the range of five to seven, meaning they felt youth and adults either exerted equal amounts of control or youth actually had more control over the program. According to one respondent, “I felt like we had a lot of input and you guys just kind of helped facilitate that in suggesting events. But overall I felt it was up to us to say what we wanted to do and you guys just helped us do that.” Another participant rated the level of youth control as a six because “we’re being heard,” stating, “You guys did orient, like, did lead us to do things like the events. But when we were most of the time in this room, it was more about us and what you guys wanted to hear, like what we had to say.” Although the adult allies largely created the design and framework for the Youth Promotores Program and facilitated meeting activities, the content, meaning, and direction for the initiative were provided by the youth and this seemed to hold greater weight for them on the power dynamic scale.

In addition, youth seemed to prefer this arrangement and recognized this type of collaborative, youth-adult partnership model as a strength of the program. When one of the youth rated their level of control at a five during the same scale activity and mentioned that youth only had “half the power” because they “didn’t actually plan out anything” and “just went with what [the adults] said,” another participant responded in this manner: “I actually see that as a good thing because, if it was just the youth, we wouldn’t have been that organized. And we wouldn’t have known who to see, who to talk to, like we did to Ryan [Collins, the Homeless Outreach and Services Coordinator for the City of West Sacramento]...I like it like this.” This comment was immediately followed by another youth who said, “Yeah, I like it like this, too,” and a number of others agreed. A few questions later, when participants were asked, “How much control would you like youth to have over this program next year?” one person responded, “I think it’s all, it’s good right now.” The other members basically agreed, with another youth stating, “It’s good

how we're doing it now." It is interesting to note that participants explained their reasoning regarding this question by invoking stereotypical concerns about youth maturity and apathy that are often expressed by adults. Statements ranged from "We don't know how the other kids will be," to "Some of them are, will not be mature and some of them will. Some of them won't care," and "You don't wanna leave too much power in the youth." In particular, participants advised against allowing freshmen to join the initiative's next cohort because they felt they would lack the requisite maturity and commitment for the work. Overall, the youth characterized some adult power and control as necessary in order for the program to function effectively and have successful outcomes.

Following these overwhelmingly positive assessments, rather than patting myself on the back for a job well done I was concerned and a bit suspicious that youth generally did not express wanting to take on additional power and responsibilities. Of the seven youth who participated in the evaluation focus group, only one stood out as somewhat critical of the power arrangement and division of roles between youth and adults. In expecting that person's opinion to be the prevailing norm rather than the outlier, I was of a similar mindset to White (1996) who writes, "If participation means that the voiceless gain a voice, we should expect this to bring some conflict. It will challenge power relations, both within any individual project and in wider society. The absence of conflict in many supposedly 'participatory' programmes is something that should raise our suspicions" (15).

Were the youth participants' responses simply public transcripts hiding a more contentious reality (Scott 1990)? While the youth feedback may not provide a full picture of all of their thoughts and feelings, I believe the sentiments they expressed were genuine and I do not get the sense they were holding back or tailoring much information. Youth and adults spent nine

months building relationships and working together, and while this may not have broken down the wall completely between public and hidden transcripts, group dynamics had definitely reached a point where youth could feel comfortable expressing their honest opinions. This point seems clear from the nature and content of the other responses given during the final evaluation session and during conversations and interactions conducted throughout the course of the program. In addition, as mentioned previously the group was able to establish a safe and supportive space and critical, open dialogue and evaluations were normalized aspects of the program that were instituted and encouraged from the beginning. All of these factors lead me to believe that youth were not just trying to tell the adult allies what they thought they wanted to hear.

Another factor that supports the interpretation of these youth responses as sincere is the fact that the adult allies made multiple attempts throughout the course of the program to get participants more involved and create opportunities for youth to take on more tasks and responsibilities and share power. If youth had wanted more control and responsibility, the opportunities were definitely there. However, whether or not youth felt adequately prepared for greater roles and responsibilities is another question altogether. It is crucial to recognize that youth need sufficient support and training in order to step into new roles and assume certain tasks (Campbell and Erbsstein 2012; Mitra 2008). Kress (2006) warns, “It is often hard to find the balance between actively engaging youth at their experience level and overwhelming them with too much responsibility” (52). The time constraints and issues with program design and implementation mentioned earlier may have also impacted participants’ ability to “learn how to effectively harness power that they may have never had before” (Jennings et al. 2006, 45).

Taking the group's feedback as genuine sentiment and noting the issues that may have limited participants' abilities or aspirations, though, a number of scholars investigating the issue of power sharing in youth programs have actually come to similar conclusions as the *promotores*. According to Camino (2005), youth-adult partnerships can be hindered by strict adherence to the "misbegotten" idea that adults should completely give up their power and the assumptions that youth should control every component of a project and possess the requisite skills and time to do so. In her opinion, "Youth desire to share responsibilities and tasks with adults, rather than do everything themselves. Moreover, youth welcome adult participation through coaching, guidance, modeling of behaviors, and sharing tasks" (77). In a similar vein, Fox and Fine (2015) prefer to refer to their work as "multigenerational participatory action research" rather than youth-led participatory action research in order to recognize the benefits of "pooling differently positioned expertise" that draws on the situated strengths of both youth and adults (48). London (2007) also argues for sustained, multigenerational social change efforts, writing "Youth-adult partnerships, not just youth-initiated and led projects, are especially critical in the realm of democratic and progressive community development, which calls for collaboration among all groups and populations" (410). All of this mirrors and supports the youth *promotores*' assessments, perhaps highlighting the need for a revised understanding and promotion of participation and power sharing within the Youth Promotores Program.

When evaluating youth participation in programs, the issue is clearly more complex than simply an equation automatically denoting high levels of participation as good and low levels as bad. As explained by London (2007), the optimum levels of youth inclusion and authority for a given program are those that best align with its organizational capacity, organizing strategy, and social change goals. "Disconnects between project design and institutional capacity may do more

harm than good to both the youth and the community, leaving participants' expectations unrealized" (411). This demonstrates the clear connection that exists between the issues with program design, capacity, and implementation examined above and levels of youth participation and power.

Discussion

Given the successes and shortcoming of the Youth Promotores Program this year, one question that is critical for YCCA to consider as it moves forward with this initiative is: "What is the highest degree of participation that our own capacity will allow us to responsibly support over time?" (London 2007, 411). The following recommendations may help the organization start to answer that question as it looks to balance participation, capacity, strategy, and goals.

Be more intentional and youth-driven, building on the foundation established this year.

The program should still work to promote enhanced youth leadership and participation. While most of the youth were satisfied with the amount of shared power this year, one participant's critique still rings particularly true: "Let us call the important people. Because they know you but they don't know us." As London (2007) puts it, "The important goal is not to require all participants to reach the highest rung of the ladder all the time, but to recognize children's rights and competence to operate at the level that matches their highest aspirations in any given situation" (408). More can certainly be done to support the abilities and aspirations of program participants. This does not mean the adult allies should completely pull back and leave young people high and dry, though, since adults also have a great deal of experience, knowledge, and resources that can benefit a collaborative effort (Camino 2005). In order to address challenges posed by the "tensions between youth empowerment goals and adult expertise" (Kirshner 2007,

370), Jennings et al. recommend that adult allies “[provide] support without domination” (45). O’Donoghue and Strobel (2007) refer to this same concept as providing “directivity and freedom” (482). Essentially, adult allies need to strike a key balance between process-oriented support for youth participants’ development and outcome-oriented support for their social change goals. One innovative strategy to help achieve these objectives might be to connect YCCA’s youth *promotores* in West Sacramento with its adult *promotores* group in the same community (Knox et al. 2005).

Recognize that power is not a zero-sum equation. Adult allies do not necessarily have to give up power in order for youth to gain it. Adults can work with youth to address institutional power inequities while still exercising their own personal power—“grounded in their experience and wisdom”—for the benefit of the overall collective effort (Camino 2005, 78). Wallerstein (1992) agrees when she notes, “Empowerment can expand power as people mobilize to control their personal and community lives” (203). Another way to think about this is to view leadership as a relational, shared, group-centered, and dynamic process rather than just a personal attribute or role. This approach recognizes that “there [is] room for each of us to step into leadership at different moments, in different ways” (Fox and Fine 2015, 55).

Clarify program design and set clearer roles and expectations for youth and adults. A balance still needs to be found in the synthesis of the *promotores* community health outreach and YPAR approaches. As the group looks to further move its efforts out into the community—completing its research agenda and transitioning into public education, social action, and policy advocacy—this could be the perfect moment to incorporate more elements of health promotion work into the project. A number of upcoming steps in the process will provide opportunities for *promotores de salud* community engagement methods, such as developing resources,

disseminating research results, raising awareness, building coalitions, and advocating for multiscalar change. Youth participants and adults allies should connect with the adult *promotores* initiative, neighborhood associations, leaders within the homeless community, and groups and individuals within their own social networks to join forces with other local community development efforts and establish a powerful, multi-generational constituency for the group's action phase. As Morello-Frosch et al. (2013) point out, "The primary reason community groups are invited to the policy table is the political pressure rooted in an organized community base" (570). Youth and adults also need to make sure the meeting schedule and expected time commitment for those involved matches the program vision and objectives they hope to accomplish in the time frame they set for themselves. This concern is directly tied to the question about organizational capacity, participation levels and types of roles. To support the development of clear roles and expectations, group agreements and memoranda of understanding should be established as early as possible in the coming program year. One youth also had this recommendation regarding roles and responsibilities: "This year...everybody had positions or something to do. Maybe next year we can change it around so everybody has a different view, different perspective."

Diversify the recruitment strategy and cast a wider net. The strategy for identifying next year's cohort should involve striking a balance between the fully adult-driven and fully youth-driven extremes utilized previously. It is important to identify potential participants who are committed to the work but who also come from a diverse range of intersectional identities and social networks. This provides youth with greater opportunities for exchange and learning (Chavez et al. 2008). It is also important to develop strategies and opportunities to include young people in the community who are "the most isolated, underserved, and often unheard" (Kieffer et

al. 2013). According to Erbstein (2013), the most vulnerable youth tend to come from low-income households and “are more likely to be youth of color, immigrant youth, LGBTQ youth, or youth who have sustained experience with foster care, homelessness, or the juvenile justice system” (109). While this year’s cohort had a number of youth who came from these vulnerable and marginalized categories, serving additional isolated and vulnerable young people in the community could entail expanding recruitment efforts beyond just River City High School. Utilizing the social capital and social networks of current and returning youth *promotores* is one possible strategy to help identify and connect with potential participants (Erbstein 2013). Reaching out to the local continuation high school, Yolo High, along with charter schools and community partners working with out-of-school youth could allow the program to recruit young people who “[are] not already in formal school and community leadership roles” (Erbstein 2013, 111). Forging a youth cohort from such a diverse array of participants could require more logistical and relationship-building work up front, but could lead to an even stronger, more resilient, and more equitable youth effort down the road.

Focus on capacity building for the organization and adult allies, too, not just the youth.

While the focus in these programs is almost always exclusively placed on youth and their development, it is also very important to invest in the adults. Supporting the training and growth of adult allies recognizes how integral they are to the whole process, especially when it comes to guiding participatory work with vulnerable youth populations (Erbstein 2013). Camino (2000) helps highlight this point:

Although it is generally accepted that community work represents new spheres for youth, it is less obvious that it is also new for many adults. Many adults will be rookies at volunteering, community work, and working as partners. Simply put, adults will find it hard to pass the torch if they themselves have not had a previous opportunity to hold the torch. (19)

In addition to technical training and skill building related to participatory approaches and youth development, adult allies can institute their own capacity-building strategies to help further their work. Through self-reflective practices, for example, adults can “model and promote their own growth as they promote the growth of the people they are working with” (Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki 1994, 117).

Identify consistent, multi-year funding and a program coordinator with dedicated staff time. Funding and staffing limitations were closely linked this year and inhibited YCCA’s ability to fully support the program. It is important to ensure sustainability and continued program growth by supporting consistency among both youth participants and adult allies (Mitra 2008). This helps a program develop and maintain its “organizational capital,” which Kress (2006) defines as “goal momentum and institutional memory” (53). This also speaks to the need for funders and charitable foundations to provide long-term funding commitments for initiatives like the Youth Promotores Program, not just seed funding for new programs (Knox et al. 2005). Given the funding and staffing challenges that are inherent to most nonprofit organizations and programs of this nature, London (2007) recommends this possible solution: “Long-term community capacity and support of youth leadership may more likely be derived from community networks rather than a single organization” (427). As an inter-agency collaborative, perhaps this is another route that YCCA can explore to support further work with youth in West Sacramento and throughout the County. Whatever the solution, though, YCCA owes it to the youth *promotores* it is working with to determine just how much participation it can adequately support with the staffing levels it plans to have for the coming year.

Conclusion

By working to combine a *promotores* model with a YPAR approach in its Youth Promotores Program, YCCA aimed to realign the traditional power relations between researchers, organizations, and young people in West Sacramento. Through a thorough analysis of the opportunities and challenges presented by this pilot youth development initiative and its hybrid approach, it is clear that the program suffered from a number of shortcomings that prevented it from reaching its full potential. However, despite these challenges the group still managed to achieve some significant objectives and satisfy a number of the “key dimensions of critical youth empowerment” identified by Jennings et al. (2006). These included providing “a welcoming, safe environment,” supporting “meaningful participation and engagement,” promoting “equitable power-sharing between youth and adults,” and facilitating “engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes” (32). The program’s shortcomings are also not a terminal diagnosis, and they can certainly be overcome if program staff and youth participants build on the foundation established this year in an intentional, collaborative, and reflective manner.

Returning to the education empowerment model proposed by Wallerstein (1992), the next task for the Youth Promotores Program is to develop the bridge between individual behavior change and collective social change. As youth participants and adult allies approach this undertaking, moving their work out into the community should provide them with greater opportunities to incorporate a health promotion model into their participatory research and action efforts. This upcoming phase of the work will require youth and adults to “defy gravity,” continuing to raise their own consciousness levels while they simultaneously raise the collective consciousness of their community (Cahill 2004). It is time for the Youth Promotores Program to

defy gravity, defy expectations, defy limitations, and, in the words of one of the youth *promotores*, “go out and do the stuff.”

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Appendix: Youth Promotores Program Documentation and Report

The Youth Promotores Program



Youth-led Participatory Action Research & Community Health Promotion Program Documentation 2015 - 2016

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Introduction

The Yolo County Children's Alliance (YCCA) launched the Youth Promotores Program in the fall of 2014 to train students at River City High School in West Sacramento to be community health promoters. With this year's cohort of 11 high school students, YCCA looked to combine last year's *promotores* framework with a stronger focus on participatory research and action that could influence local health-related policies. Historically, both of the approaches that YCCA worked to synthesize emerged out of a growing recognition that those communities who have been disproportionately impacted by inequitable conditions should be active participants in framing, researching and addressing those conditions.¹

- **Community Health Promotion** trains lay members of the community to be health outreach workers and educators to promote locally relevant, culturally appropriate, and effective health interventions.²
- **Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** creates spaces for research and activism that are driven by youth's perspectives and strengths, allowing young people to study and address social issues that impact them.³

The project partners for this initiative included YCCA, River City High School, and the UC Davis Center for Regional Change (CRC). The adult ally team was composed of one staff member and two AmeriCorps Volunteers from YCCA, and a graduate student volunteer from the University of California, Davis who joined the effort after the group's second meeting.

Over the course of nine months, youth *promotores* and adult allies met sixteen times, primarily on the high school's campus. Meeting activities were designed to promote process as well as outcomes, emphasizing relationship building, co-learning, leadership development, and power sharing among youth and adults. Participation was not simply one of the methods, but defined the entire approach of the program.⁴

¹ Barbara A. Israel, Eugenia Eng, Amy J. Schulz, and Edith A. Parker. 2013. "Introduction to Methods for CBPR for Health." In *Methods for Community-based Participatory Research for Health*, edited by Barbara A. Israel, Eugenia Eng, Amy J. Schulz and Edith A. Parker, 3-37. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

² Stuart J. Cohen, and Maia Ingram. 2005. "Border Health Strategic Initiative: Overview and Introduction to a Community-based Model for Diabetes Prevention and Control." *Preventing Chronic Disease* 2 (1).

³ Julio Cammarota, and Michelle Fine. 2008. "Youth Participatory Action Research: A Pedagogy for Transformational Resistance." In *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion*, edited by Julio Cammarota and Michelle Fine, 1-9. New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

⁴ Caitlin Cahill. 2007. "Doing Research with Young People: Participatory Research and the Rituals of Collective Work." *Children's Geographies* 5 (3):297-312.

Youth described their city as split between the “good” side in the south and the “bad” side in the north. A number of data sources measuring community wellbeing also support their understanding of West Sacramento’s geography, such as the maps and analyses created by the UC Davis Center for Regional Change and displayed through their Regional Opportunity Index: <http://interact.regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/roi/>. The primary issue identified and explored by the youth was homelessness in West Sacramento. Lack of community involvement, particularly around the homelessness issue, was also identified as a key concern. Both of these issues were primarily situated in, and had the greatest impact on, what youth identified as the “bad” side of town: Bryte and Broderick. However, youth also recognized the strength and resiliency of the community members in the older and more neglected neighborhoods in the north of the city, acknowledging the prevalence and impact of negative stereotypes and sweeping generalizations.

This report documents the meetings, activities, and lessons of the Youth Promotores Program for the 2015-2016 school year. The team was not able to complete all of the steps in a full YPAR cycle, so this work only represents a curriculum-in-progress and is missing a number of key stages. In particular, participants did not complete the data collection or analysis phases and were unable to develop or implement a social action strategy. However, the plan is to continue the program into the next school year, utilizing and building upon this effort with returning youth leaders and new members. The following flowchart provides an overview of the program’s process and this report is organized in the same fashion—with each step delineated as a separate chapter with corresponding agendas, activity descriptions and facilitator notes.



This report is meant to serve as a reference guide but should not be seen as a one-size-fits-all, step-by-step prescription for youth-serving programs. As noted by Wallerstein in her work on empowerment and health, “[A] curriculum should not be prescribed, but should emanate from the listening process...Curricula should be built around an opportunity for people to develop trust and to share real life issues and emotional concerns.”⁵ This is what emanated from our work with youth in West Sacramento, and it is hoped that the following documentation will support and assist YCCA, its partners in the California Family Resource Association, and the young people they serve as they work together to promote youth empowerment, social justice and equitable health outcomes throughout Yolo County and across the State of California.

⁵ Nina Wallerstein. 1992. "Powerlessness, Empowerment, and Health: Implications for Health Promotion Programs." *American Journal of Health Promotion* 6 (3):197-205.

Chapter 1:

Group Formation

Reflections from the Field

Lessons Learned:

- While some issues with recruitment, representation, and access did exist with this year's cohort, the program still managed to bring together young people across a wide range of key vulnerable demographics and intersectional social identities.
- The eleven-member cohort was primarily composed of high school seniors and had nine female members and two males, with five Latino youth, four non-Latino Whites, and two Middle Easterners. A majority of the youth came from immigrant and/or non-English-speaking households and at least a few of them had experiences dealing with homelessness and substandard or inadequate housing. While most of the participants lived in the more resource-poor neighborhoods in the north of town, about a quarter of the youth lived in the affluent Southport area.
- Youth participants largely came from the same social network. While this may have aided with early group dynamics and cohesion, it also may have led to a missed opportunity for greater social bridging and relationship building.
- This year's group did not create any group agreements, which led to problems and confusion related to the responsibilities of participants and adult allies. To support the development of clear roles and expectations, group agreements should be established as early as possible in the program year.
- The program intentionally focused on relationship building and creating a safe and welcoming space, which allowed for critical collective dialogue and reflection. A number of youth mentioned having the opportunity to meet new people as a valuable aspect of the program.

Youth *Promotores* in Their Own Words:

- "Last year, a lot of [the group members] were really good students but they had other things to do so they couldn't show up a lot."
- "This year's group was better in the sense that everybody worked together."
- "We were all already kind of friends beforehand, so that made the group better. That way we knew what was going on."
- "I also loved this group because we had different perspectives about the community."
- "Since we all live in different areas we got the chance to share and see, like, our different thoughts and what we believed in. And, in that way, it helped us."

Youth Recruitment

One of the first steps to any YPAR or youth development initiative involves recruiting the youth participants. Whenever possible, having youth involved in this process is very important. This is a more common possibility in a multi-year initiative where some students graduate and move on from the program while others remain and can work to replenish the cohort. However, adult allies should also be involved in this work in order to help young people develop a diverse group beyond their own immediate social networks.

With the Youth Promotores Program, its first cohort was identified through a more adult-driven recruitment campaign that worked through key school staff members and utilized fliers, announcements, and tabling at school events. This led to a youth cohort that was very diverse, but struggled with issues related to uneven commitment levels and follow-through. As a result, this year's recruitment strategy was very much youth-driven, with one returning youth participant taking charge of the entire process to find colleagues who would be fully committed to the program. This led to a youth cohort that had more follow-through than the previous one, but most of the participants came from the same tight-knit group of friends. Now, the strategy for



identifying next year's cohort is looking to strike a balance between these two extremes. A group of graduating and continuing youth *promotores* has already staffed an information booth for the program at key school functions and youth plan to conduct interviews with prospective candidates over the summer. One of the primary concerns expressed by youth is that new members should join because they care about the work and want to make a difference in their community, not simply because of the prospect of earning an academic scholarship.

When developing a recruitment strategy, it is important to identify potential participants who are committed to the work but who also come from a diverse range of intersectional identities and social networks. This provides youth with greater opportunities for exchange and learning and allows them to “[build] alliances across difference”.⁶ In pursuing participatory work that seeks to rectify traditional power imbalances in research and community engagement, it is important to recognize that power relations and issues of privilege and access are also present

⁶ Vivian Chavez, Bonnie Duran, Quinton E. Baker, Magdalena M. Avila, and Nina Wallerstein. 2008. "The Dance of Race and Privilege in Community Based Participatory Research." In *Community Based Participatory Research for Health: From Process to Outcomes*, edited by Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein, 91-106. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

within the youth community and among potential program participants.⁷ One must be aware of these concerns and seek out strategies and opportunities to include young people in the community who are “the most isolated, underserved, and often unheard”.⁸ The most vulnerable youth are less likely to already be in formal leadership roles and more likely to come from low-income households and be “youth of color, immigrant youth, LGBTQ youth, or youth who have sustained experience with foster care, homelessness, or the juvenile justice system.”⁹ In the case of the Youth Promotores Program, for example, this could entail expanding its recruitment efforts beyond just River City High School to also include the local continuation high school, charter schools, and out-of-school youth. Utilizing the social capital and social networks of current and returning youth *promotores* is another possible strategy to help identify and connect with more potential participants. Forging a cohort from such a diverse array of young people could require more logistical and relationship-building work up front, but could lead to an even stronger, more resilient, and more equitable youth effort down the road.

⁷ Cathann A. Kress. 2006. "Youth Leadership and Youth Development: Connections and Questions." *New Directions for Youth Development* 2006 (109):45-56.

⁸ Edith C. Kieffer, Yamir Salabarría-Pena, Angela M. Odoms-Young, Sharla K. Willis, Gloria Palmisano, and J. Ricardo Guzman. 2013. "The Application of Focus Group Methodologies to CBPR." In *Methods for Community-based Participatory Research for Health*, edited by Barbara A. Israel, Eugenia Eng, Amy J. Schulz and Edith A. Parker, 249-276. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

⁹ Nancy Erbstein. 2013. "Engaging underrepresented youth populations in community youth development: Tapping social capital as a critical resource." *New Directions for Youth Development* 2013 (138):109-124.

Group Agreements

Creating a safe, supportive space is a critical component of all youth development work and provides a strong foundation for any YPAR effort. Setting clear, explicit expectations at the beginning of a program ensures that youth and adults are all on the same page and gives you a framework for group management and wellbeing.

Objectives: Youth will understand the role and value of group agreements. Youth will generate and agree upon a list of agreements for their own group.

Materials & Preparation: Flip chart and markers; pens and paper for pair activity.

Duration: 30 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker

What Are Agreements? (5 minutes)

Introduce the activity by providing a brief overview of what group agreements are and why they are important.

- Has anyone ever used agreements before in another group or program? If so, can you explain what they are and how they worked?
- Unlike rules—which are usually decided by just one person and imposed on everyone else without their input or consent—agreements are created collectively by all of us and it is also up to all of us to hold each other accountable to them. Establishing agreements is a way for us to all decide how we want to be when we are together and what each of us needs from the group in order to do our best and feel safe, respected, supported, and valued. We will use these agreements for the rest of the program, but this will also be a living document that we can revisit and change at any point if we want to.

Think, Pair, Share (20 minutes)

Once youth understand the concept, have them split up into pairs and brainstorm their own lists of group agreements. Have them designate one person as the recorder to write down their responses and the other as the reporter to share their work with the rest of the group. You can either have youth create their lists from scratch, or you can provide them with a basic list of key agreements and ask them to modify it with any additions, subtractions or changes they like. Once pairs have generated their lists, go around the room and have each pair share one item from their list without repeating something that has already been said. Record all the agreements on a flip chart until no one has a new item to share.

Some common and useful group agreements include:

- *One Mic* – only one person speaks at a time
- *Respect* – respect one another and diverse opinions and perspectives
- *Confidentiality* – what is said here, stays here
- *Arrive and End On Time* – importance of time management for youth, adults, and facilitators

- *Step Up, Step Back* – if you are generally someone who is quiet, challenge yourself to participate and speak more; if you are generally someone who speaks a lot, challenge yourself to step back, listen actively and create space for others to participate
- *Have Fun* – always important and often overlooked as an agreement

Agreeing on the Agreements (5 minutes)

Review the list of agreements that the group created and make sure everyone understands what each agreement means. Be sure to clarify any questions or concerns the youth have. Once everyone is okay with the list, have them each come up and sign their name on the agreements sheet. This list should remain posted and visible throughout the remainder of the program. You can remind the youth that this is meant to be a living and adaptable document and it can be revisited periodically to make sure it is working properly for everyone. At any point in the future when group behavior management is needed, the posted agreements can help you and participants gently remind one another of how you all agreed to be together.

Chapter 2:

Introduction to YPAR & the Power of Research

Reflections from the Field

Lessons Learned:

- Meetings held in the school's conference room seemed to be more effective and productive than meetings held in the career center/computer lab. The quieter and more intimate setting gave the group greater privacy and helped nurture a safe, welcoming space for critical dialogue and reflection. The career center was a more open and public space, with lots of foot traffic and distractions from school staff members and other students.
- Scheduling meetings on school minimum days worked the best for youth participants, since they often had other competing commitments after regular school days.
- Another successful scheduling practice involved setting aside time at the beginning of every meeting for food, hanging out and checking in with one another. Incorporating this into every agenda worked well for the group and gave us all time to connect and build relationships a bit more. The challenge, though, was maintaining this fun, free, goofy atmosphere and energy throughout the meeting, while also staying on task, working critically through our issues and getting things accomplished. To maintain this balance, the facilitation team members all need to be in agreement concerning the importance and goals of the agenda activities. They also should model the behavior they would like to encourage, gently bringing participants back to the task at hand when needed while still keeping things fun and enjoyable.
- It seemed to be less beneficial to present the groups' community maps and identify local issues and concerns after the youth had already participated in the online map analysis and research activity. With the particular indices of the online maps fresh in their minds, youth then defined their own community issues only within the narrow parameters of those indicators. As a result, it was difficult to get them to articulate concepts from their own experiences and apart from what they remembered seeing on the maps. In their presentations, youth referred to broad levels of "civic participation," "health," and "education" to highlight their concerns, rather than being specific about how those issues actually played out in their communities and in their daily lives. Having the groups present their community maps and talk about their issues before introducing them to the online mapping tools probably would have produced more precise, nuanced and personal answers.

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

November 17th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Introductions (15 minutes)

- Share name, grade, and why they are part of the program

Data & Mapping Breakdown, Part 1 (15 minutes)

- Community mapping activity
 - What are maps and why are they useful?
 - What can maps reveal about our communities and what might they conceal?
 - Who creates maps? Who controls what's included in them and excluded from them? What does this reveal about the power dynamics that might be at work?

Introduction to CRC Mapping Tools (30 minutes)

- PowerPoint presentation introducing youth and adult allies to the Putting Youth on the Map (PYOM) and Regional Opportunity Index (ROI) maps and tools

Hands-On Map Research Activity (30 minutes)

- Youth investigate different issues and scenarios using the online mapping tools to familiarize themselves with their features and capabilities

Data & Mapping Breakdown, Part 2 (15 minutes)

- Youth present and explain their community maps, highlighting key locations along with important community issues and assets they identified
 - What is one issue that is important to you?

Closing and Next Steps (15 minutes)

- Next meeting date and time?

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

December 8th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Data & Mapping Breakdown, Part 2 (20 minutes)

- Follow up and finish community maps discussion from previous meeting

Identifying an Issue (15 minutes)

- Groups create lists of issues and assets identified in maps

Youth-led Participatory Action Research (15 minutes)

- “Steps in a YPAR Project” Shuffle
- Brief overview of general timeline and approach

Timeline & Commitment (20 minutes)

- Layout sample project timeline
 - What can we all commit to in the next 4-5 months?
- Introduce and discuss Brandon’s potential research and role

Icebreaker/Energizer (10 minutes)

Getting Started (30 minutes)

- What do we want to know about the issue we identify and what do we want to do with that info?
 - What are the end products we hope to get out of this?
- “Letter to My Future Self” Activity
 - How does this fit into youth members’ personal goals: Senior project? College apps? Resume? Community service?

Next Steps (10 minutes)

- Next meeting date and time?
- Homework for winter break?
 - Have conversations about our community with friends and family
 - Research examples of end products we’d like to create with our project
 - Are there things already happening in the community that we want to be a part of?

Community Mapping

Creating community maps is a fun and creative way to begin community assessment work. This activity also provides a clear transition to working with online mapping tools like Putting Youth on the Map and the Regional Opportunity Index. Components of this activity are adapted from the Making Youth Data Matter Curriculum from the UC Davis Center for Regional Change and from the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) curriculum by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

Objectives: Youth will understand and be able to articulate the importance of maps, the power dynamics they can reveal, and how they can be used. Youth will create their own maps of their community, identifying and assessing key issues, assets, and locations. This initial community assessment will get youth moving toward identifying an issue they would like to focus on for their research and action efforts.

Materials & Preparation: Enough large sheets of poster paper or flip chart paper for the number of groups you plan to have, with extras just in case their maps require multiple sheets; enough assorted colored markers for each group to share; tape or thumb tacks for posting the maps on the wall (if they are not on self-sticking paper).

Duration: 1 hour

Roles: Facilitator, time keeper, note taker

Data & Mapping Breakdown (10 minutes)

Before youth create their own maps, it is important to first contextualize this activity by discussing what maps are and what they are used for. The following prompts can help spark a critical conversation:

- What are maps? Why are they useful?
- What can maps reveal about our communities and what might they conceal?
- Who creates maps? Who controls what's included in them and excluded from them? What does this reveal about the power dynamics that might be at work?

Creating Community Maps (20 minutes)

Split youth up into small groups of two to four people. Provide each group with a large sheet of flip chart or poster paper and an assortment of colored markers. Have each group draw their own map of their community, noting key landmarks (houses, stores, streets, parks, schools, physical features, etc.) and highlighting locations that are important to them. Have them also mark the locations of specific concerns or problems in their community. While it can be useful to have every group focus on the same community boundaries or neighborhood, it can also be very revealing to see which boundaries or neighborhoods each group self-selects. In any case, you want youth to be able to draw an area that they know well. Some prompting questions to guide youth through this activity include:

- What are the boundaries of your community? How do you know where it begins and ends?

- Where are places that youth like to hang out?
- What are strengths or assets that your community has and where are they located?
- Where do problems in your community occur?

Group Share & Reflection (15 minutes)

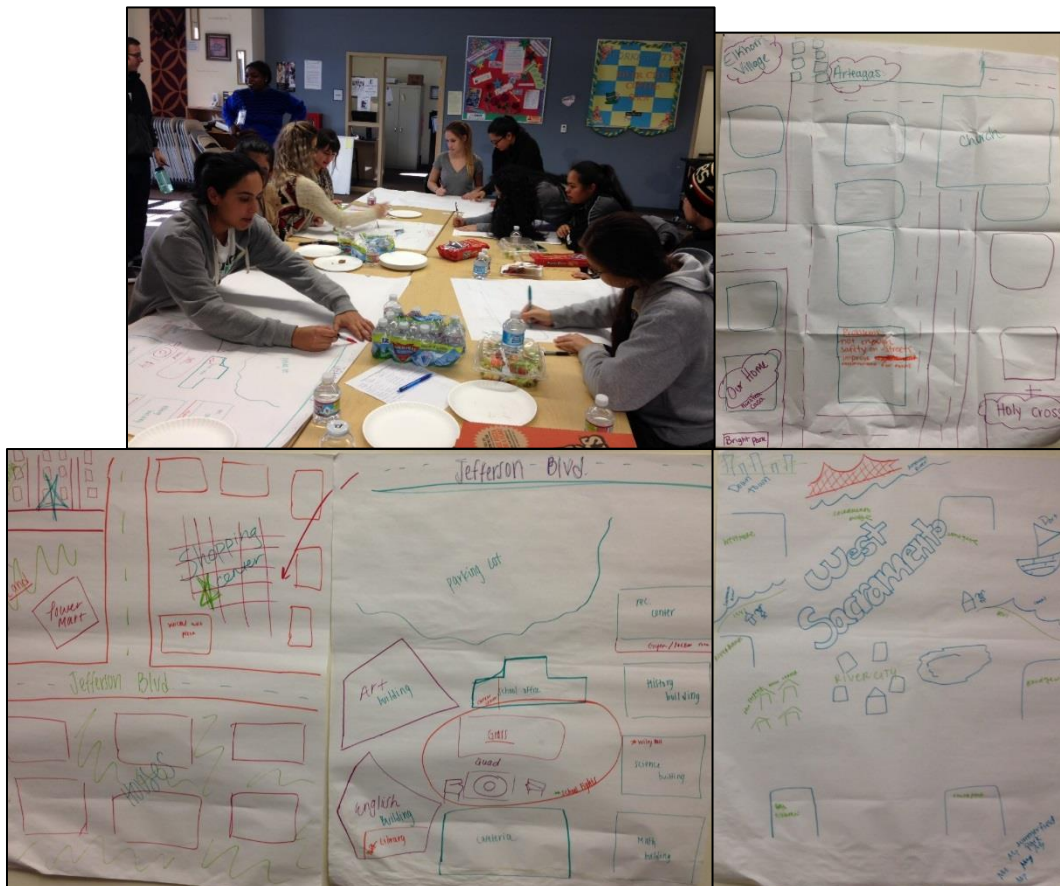
Have each group present and explain their community map to the group, highlighting the key locations, issues and assets they identified. Potential reflection questions include:

- What were some similarities or differences between the different maps? Why do you think those similarities or differences came up?
- Of all the things you identified, what is one issue or problem that is important to you?

Identifying Issues & Assets (15 minutes)

With a note taker recording responses on a flip chart, have youth create a master list of the issues and assets that were identified in all of the maps. Potential debrief questions include:

- What kinds of positive resources are there for youth in your community? Do youth actually use them? Do you use them? Why or why not?
- What do youth need in the community that does not currently exist?
- What happens when there is a problem in the community? Who does it affect?
- How does change occur and who is responsible for making change?



Online Map Analysis & Research

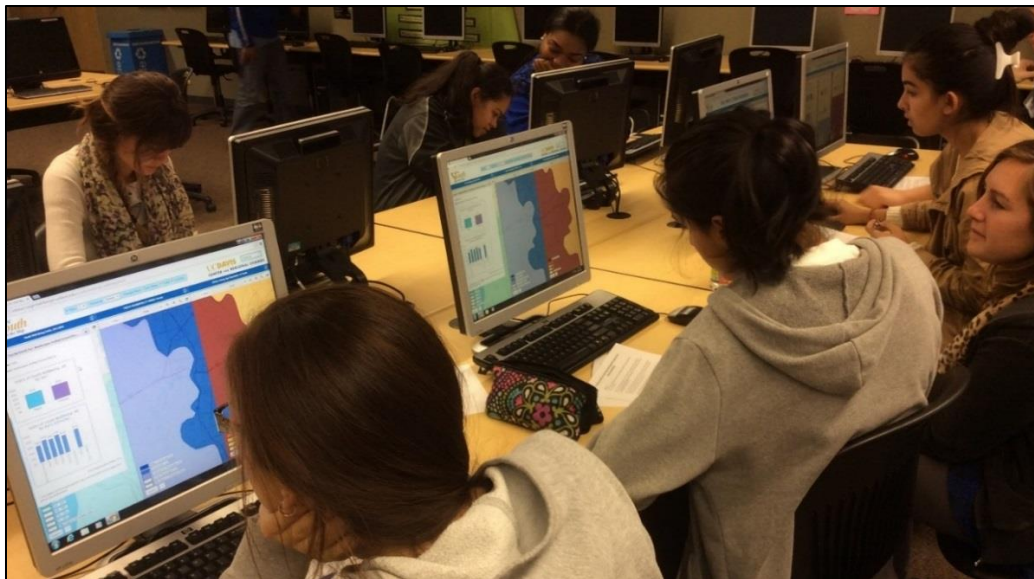
Online mapping tools provide a wealth of community data that are easily searchable and customizable and dynamically displayed. The information that can be found through the UC Davis Center for Regional Change's Putting Youth on the Map (PYOM) platform is especially relevant for investigating and comparing youth wellbeing and vulnerability throughout California by school district. Although not included in this activity, the Regional Opportunity Index (ROI) is another powerful online mapping tool that youth can utilize. This activity is adapted from the Making Youth Data Matter Curriculum from the UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

Objectives: Youth will become familiar with online mapping tools created by the UC Davis Center for Regional Change and will utilize them to investigate conditions in their own community.

Materials & Preparation: Computers with internet access; enough copies of both PYOM worksheets for all participants; a computer connected to a projector for the PYOM presentation and demonstration.

Duration: 1 hour and 10 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper



Introduction to PYOM Mapping Tools (30 minutes)

The facilitator for this activity should familiarize themselves with the PYOM platform before conducting this training. Their website (interact.regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/youth) has many helpful training modules to familiarize yourself with the maps and their capabilities. In order to introduce youth to PYOM, walk them through both prezi presentations found here: <http://interact.regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/youth/navigate.html#navigation>. These interactive presentations describe what PYOM is and demonstrate how to use the maps. The "PYOM Walk-

through Script” is also a helpful guide for highlighting the main navigational functions and capabilities of the maps.

Hands-On Map Research Activity (30 minutes)

With the two PYOM worksheets as guides, youth will investigate different issues and scenarios to familiarize themselves with the platform’s features. Have youth either work on their own, with a partner, or in small groups, depending on how you want to structure the activity and how many computers you have. Provide participants with the worksheets and hover from group to group as they work through them, assisting as needed.

Debrief & Reflection (10 minutes)

Once youth have completed the worksheet exercises, come back together as a full group to debrief the activity. Some potential reflection questions include:

- What information about your community surprised you the most as you did the research through PYOM?
- How did what you found out about your community using PYOM compare to the issues identified by the group through the community mapping activity? What similarities or differences did you notice?
- How might these mapping tools be useful for our own research project?

2.3.B PYOM Walk-through Script

Let's explore how to make the maps you want. [Click "Interactive Maps" on the home page]

When you enter the mapping site, you will see three "panes." These are your palettes where you can create your customized maps. They initially load with maps of the Youth Well-Being Index (YWI), the Youth Vulnerability Index (YVI), and the 2014 general election youth eligible voter turnout. As an overall guide,

- The Youth Well-Being Index and related data maps use school district boundaries. All other maps are based on either census tracts, which are areas containing about 5000 people, counties, or CCDs (roughly towns). In areas with high population density (such as in cities) census tracts are small, and in low density areas (such as in rural areas) these are larger.
- On all maps, darker colors always symbolize "more" of whatever the map is measuring, and lighter colors mean "less."
- Click the "i" button on map titles to learn more about the map.
- You can scroll over buttons on the site to learn about their function.

You can customize maps in many ways, depending on your goal (or just your curiosity!)

- You can change the number of map panels.
- You can change the map you see by using the "Change Map" button to pick a map type [show button in the top tool bar, or each of 3 panels, show how you can click + button to see more, create a domain map in Panel 2 and a measure map in Panel 3]
- A Street Map is our default base map. You can change the "fade" to reveal the base maps below. You can change the base map, to see Terrain (showing elevation and ground cover), an Aerial View, or a grey canvas view with no base map.) [change back to street]
- You can zoom in and out in 3 ways: using the + and – magnification buttons, by double clicking on any spot on the map, and by holding down the "shift" key and highlighting an area.
- You can get to a specific place by clicking the flag button and typing in a location.
- You can include or hide the legend by clicking the legend button (click off and back on)
- You can see and hide a map's data sources by clicking the ? button
- You can zoom all three maps together, but you can also unclick the "scale" to allow for different zoom levels in the same area, unclick the "location" to allow maps to show different areas, or unclick both.
- You can jump back to the full California view by clicking this California-shaped button.
- If you want to revert back to an earlier map version, you can click this back arrow here.
- To learn more about a place on a map, click it to see a pop-up box. Many map pop-ups show how scores or data for that location compare to a statewide mean [show example in panel 1 YWI]. For YWI and YVI index scores, which are made up of multiple components, the pop-up will also show information for those sub-scores. For example for the YWI, the popup will show the education, social relationships and community participation communities scores.
- If you're interested in seeing the state map for one of these areas, say health – click the bar on the chart, and it will change the map to the health map.

Putting Youth on the Map Introduction Worksheet

This activity will guide you through using the Putting Youth on the Map platform.

Step 1- In your browser, open up Putting Youth on the Map by entering the following web address: <http://interact.regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/youth>. Click on the right hand side of the page labeled “Interactive Maps.”

Step 2- Once on the interactive map, click on the Flag Icon in the left panel (Youth Well-Being Index). In the bottom half of the box next to the “School District” label, enter in your school district and click on the search button.

Step 3- Now that your district is outlined on the map, click on your district. A pop-up menu will appear with a district score. What is it? How does it compare to the Statewide Average? What is the highest domain score in the lower score breakdown box? What is the lowest domain score?

District Score	
Statewide Average	
Lowest Domain Score	
Highest Domain Score	

Step 4- In the Upper right hand corner of the Pop-up Box Click on the scale icon. A pop-up box will appear with the district scores by gender and race/ethnicity. What are the Youth Well-Being Scores for Males and Females? What Racial or Ethnic group has the highest index score? The lowest?

Males	
Females	
Highest Scoring Racial/Ethnic Group	
Lowest Scoring Racial/Ethnic Group	

Now you have an overall sense of how youth are doing within your school district. Next we will look a bit deeper into your district using a research scenario.

Putting Youth on the Map Scenario Worksheet

"Bullying and School Safety"

In this activity you will be guided through Putting Youth on the Map to find data and maps that speak to Bullying and School Safety.

Step 1: Open up Putting Youth on the Map (interact.regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/youth). Click on the interactive map button on the right side of the page.

Step 2: Now that you are on the mapping site, click on the "# Maps" dropdown menu in the center tool bar and change the number from 3 to 2.


Step 3: Click on the "Map 1" dropdown menu in the furthest left panel. Click on the "+" button next to the "Youth Well-Being Index". Click on the "+" next to "Health". Click on the link for to map "Feeling Safe."

Step 4: Click on the "Map 2" dropdown menu in the furthest right panel. Click on the "+" button next to the "Youth Well-Being Index". Click on the "+" next to "Health". Click on the link for to map "Feeling Safe at School."

Step 5: Click on the "Flag" button in the furthest left Panel. In the pop-up box, in the lower section next to label that says "School District", type in the name of your school District. Your school district will now be outlined. Do the same for the right panel.

Step 6: In the "Feeling Safe" Map, hover over the "i" symbol to learn about the map you are looking at. Now click on your outlined school district. What is the % of students who feel safe in your district? How does it compare to the state average?

Feeling Safe District Score	Feeling Safe Statewide Average


Click on the  button. What are the scores for young men and young women?

Young Men	Young Women

Based on your experiences and the experiences of your friends and classmates, does this data accurately represent how safe people really feel from being harassed at school? Why or Why not?

Step 7: In the “Feeling Safe at School” Map, hover over the “?” symbol to learn about the map you are looking at. Now click on your outlined school district. What is the % of students who feel safe at school in your district? How does it compare to the state average?

Feeling Safe at School District Score	Feeling Safe at School Statewide Average

Click on the  button. What is the % for young men and young women?

Young Men	Young Women

How do these percentages of the “Feeling Safe at School” map compare to the percentages from the “Feeling Safe” map? Is there a difference? Why do you think there is a difference? What can you say based on these percentages about how safe students really do feel at school?

Step 8: Now that you have looked at used the mapping tool, what are some ways you think you can use this tool for your work?

Letter to My Future Self

This is a great activity to do towards the beginning of a program to capture the early goals and expectations that each participant brings to the project. The letters serve as a time capsule and opening them together at the end of the program makes for a fun wrap-up and reflection activity.

Objectives: Youth will write a letter to themselves detailing their goals and expectations for the project and for themselves. The letters will be returned to the youth at the program's completion to reflect on how far they have come and what they have accomplished.

Materials & Preparation: Enough pieces of blank paper, pens and letter-sized envelopes for each participant; colored markers, stickers, or other art supplies for decoration.

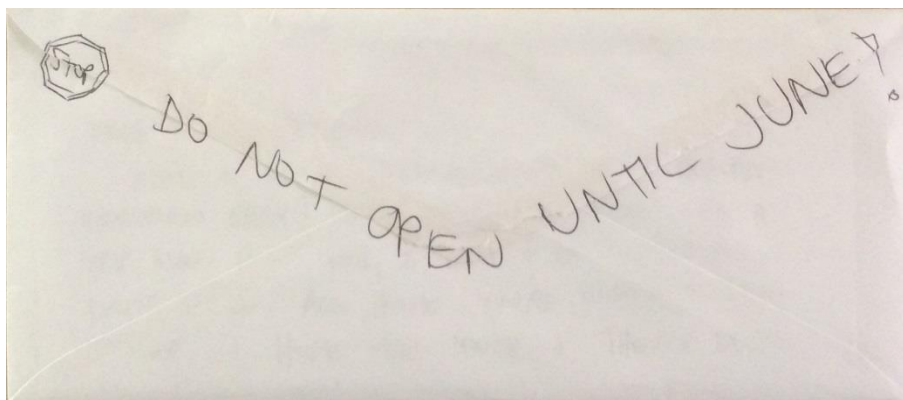
Duration: 15 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper

Write a Letter to Your Future Self (15 minutes)

Have youth write a letter to themselves that they will not get to see again until the end of the program. After youth have written their letters, have them seal them in their envelopes and write across the seam so they know the envelope is not tampered with ahead of time. Adult allies will collect the letters and save them until the end of the program. You can also have youth decorate their letters and their envelopes if you want. Some potential prompting questions include:

- What do you hope to accomplish personally and as a group by the end of this program?
- Where do you think the group will be at that point?
- Where do you hope to be in school, in this program, and/or in your personal life by the end of this program?



“Steps in a YPAR Project” Shuffle

This is a fun and dynamic movement exercise to introduce youth to the various steps involved in a YPAR project. This is a good way to start discussing and unpacking what a YPAR project entails and the amount of time and commitment the full inquiry and action cycle requires. This activity is adapted from the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) curriculum by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

Objectives: Youth will understand all of the steps in the inquiry process and what makes a YPAR approach to research unique. Youth will understand the amount of time and commitment required by a full YPAR project cycle in order to set realistic goals and expectations for their own project moving forward.

Materials & Preparation: Each step in the inquiry process should be printed or written on a separate piece of paper

Duration: 20 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper

“Steps in a YPAR Project” Shuffle (10 minutes)

Explain that we will be discussing the research and inquiry process and learning about the YPAR cycle and this activity will help us understand the various steps that are involved. Shuffle up the papers with the steps printed/written on them so they are out of order and pass them out to the youth. To make sure each participant has a paper, you can combine or divide up the steps accordingly to reach the number you need. Have youth participants stand up and move around to rearrange themselves into the correct order. Make sure they hold their steps in front of them so everyone can read each paper. If people are still out of order, have the group analyze the situation and work to correct themselves until they are all in the right place.



Discussion & Reflection (10 minutes)

Provide a brief overview of the general YPAR timeline and approach. Allow youth to reflect on the various steps of the process and the overall commitment they each entail.

- What was your initial reaction after seeing all of the steps in the process laid out like this?
- Which steps sound like the most fun to you?
- Which steps seem like they would be the most challenging?
- What do you think makes a YPAR project unique from other research or action approaches?
- Does our time commitment and meeting schedule seem like it will give us enough time to get through this whole process? Why or why not?



The steps in a YPAR project

Chapter 3:

Identifying Community Assets & Issues

Reflections from the Field

Lessons Learned:

- Unfortunately we were not able to personally meet with any of the former youth leaders from the Sactown Heroes, despite many communication attempts. This was definitely a missed opportunity and is still worth pursuing.
- While researching the Sactown Heroes' materials, it might have been more effective to have youth do this activity in pairs or individually rather than in small groups. Participants were crowded around just two computers, and at times it was hard to maintain their attention spans. The Sactown Heroes' comic book seemed to grab participants' attention more than their story map, which is something to keep in mind as the *promotores* look to develop their own advocacy materials. Also, the YouTube videos on the story map were blocked by the high school's academic internet filter, so this limited the research sources we could access on campus.
- While youth participants this year effectively took charge leading some tasks—such as planning and facilitating energizers, recording discussion input, keeping the group on task, developing online outreach tools, contacting community members, and conducting interviews and research meetings—the adult allies still largely made the decisions regarding agenda creation and program strategizing outside of meetings and facilitated most of the agenda items during meetings. Attempts by the adult allies to further shift these roles and power arrangements were not successful. It was very difficult to help youth successfully step into more significant facilitation and planning roles without enough dedicated time for adequate training, guidance, and practice—particularly outside of regularly scheduled group meetings.
- Including an “open floor” section in meeting agendas—when youth could bring up any topic they wanted for discussion—was a good addition. This allowed us to establish more opportunities for the youth to provide input and lead discussions without everything being overly planned ahead of time. We also created a group email for communication outside of meetings and utilized google docs for preparing and collaborating on meeting agendas, with some limited success.

Youth *Promotores* in Their Own Words:

- “I liked being able to talk about real community issues with people my own age. I do a lot of community work with people older than me. This was a nice job.”
- “Since we live in this community, most of us were able to see it first hand and just see what’s going on.”
- “This year...everybody had positions or something to do. Maybe next year we can change it around so everybody has a different view, different perspective.”

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

January 19th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (15 minutes)

Opening Think, Pair, Share on Winter Break Homework (15 minutes)

- How was talking to people about the challenges and strengths in our community?
 - What did you learn? Ideas? Breakthroughs?
- Any examples of campaign/advocacy materials or products that you found?

Sactown Heroes YPAR Project (40 minutes)

- Previous group of youth who examined similar issues in West Sacramento 6 years ago
- Split into 2 groups to examine the products of their community needs assessment
 - One group researches the story map and the other looks at the comic book
 - What did they do? What did you like and what would you have done differently?
 - What similarities or differences do you see between what they identified and what you did?
 - Has anything changed since these issues were brought to light 6 years ago?
 - After looking at this previous project, what questions emerge for you?
- Groups share their research with the whole *promotores* team and discuss

Narrowing Down our Options & Settling on an Issue (15 minutes)

- Given the issues we've already identified and what we now know about this previous youth effort, can we narrow down our list of potential issues we want to address?
- Revisit "Timeline and Commitment" conversation from last meeting
 - Knowing a similar needs assessment was already done might allow us to move more quickly towards action, since we want to build on their work rather than just do it over again
- Dot Voting Activity

Planning & Logistics (10 minutes)

- Identify and designate youth leadership roles
 - Scheduler? Energizer? Communications & Outreach? Research Advisory Team? Facilitators?
- What other roles and responsibilities can we identify?
 - How do we decide who does what?

Next Steps & Evaluation (10 minutes)

- Contact former Sactown Heroes?
- Next meeting date and time?
- Meeting evaluation

Research & Analysis of Previous Youth Initiatives

It is usually the case that we will not be the first initiative to work with young people on a participatory research and action effort in our community. This means that previous youth-led efforts can serve as valuable resources for current projects and programs. In addition, it can be common for youth-led community assessments to be conducted over and over again without ever leading to an action campaign. Learning from and building upon the work of earlier efforts may help current programs get a head start on their research and move more quickly towards action steps. Connecting with past participants from previous youth-led initiatives also provides current youth with a unique opportunity for relationship building, mentorship, and information exchange and could provide key informants for future research meetings.

In our situation in West Sacramento, another project known as Youth Voices for Change had worked with young people in the community six years before the start of the Youth Promotores Program. Their team of young people called themselves the Sactown Heroes and created both a comic book and an online story map after working for a year with researchers from UC Davis. This gave youth *promotores* the chance to learn from youth that came before them and compare their community assessment to one conducted a number of years ago.

Objectives: Youth will investigate end products created by an earlier YPAR project to inform their current efforts. Youth will try to connect with past participants to arrange research meetings.

Materials & Preparation: Computers with internet access, flip chart or white board and markers

Duration: 40 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker

Investigate the Sactown Heroes YPAR Project (20 minutes)

Have youth split into two groups to examine the end products created by the previous project online. One group will research the story map and the other will look at the comic book.

- What did they do? What did you like and what would you have done differently?
- What is similar or different between what they identified then and what you did now?
- What has changed since these issues were brought to light six years ago?
- After looking at this previous project, what questions emerge for you?

Group Share & Discussion (20 minutes)

Both teams share their findings and thoughts with the whole group and discuss.

- How does learning from this earlier work impact our current project?
- Should we try to contact any participants from the last group to try and meet with them?

Issue Identification & Dot Voting

After a list of community issues and concerns has been generated, dot voting is an easy and useful activity for narrowing down and prioritizing options.

Objectives: Youth will prioritize the community issue(s) they would like to focus on for the remainder of their project.

Materials & Preparation: Flip chart paper and markers, enough colored dot stickers for each participant to get three dots

Duration: minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker

Pre-Meeting Homework

After generating a list of community issues and assets, and before voting on them, have youth perform the following homework between meetings.

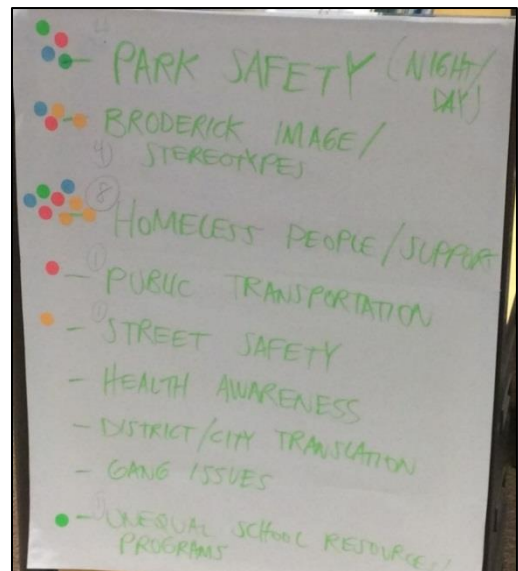
- Have conversations about your community with friends and family.
 - What issues and assets do they identify? What do they think about the things you identified as a group?
- Can you find some examples of end products you'd like to create with our project?
 - These can be YouTube videos, websites, pamphlets, posters, etc.
- Are there things already happening in the community that you want to be a part of?

Opening Discussion to Debrief Homework (15 minutes)

- Are there any examples of campaign/advocacy materials or products that you found?
- How was talking to people about the challenges and strengths in your community?
 - What did you learn?
 - Any common themes?
 - Any ideas or breakthroughs?

Dot Voting Activity (15 minutes)

Revisit the list of issues created during the community mapping exercise. Have the full list written on flip chart paper and posted on the wall. Give each youth participant three dot stickers. Have youth place a sticker next to each of their top three priority issues and make sure they do not just put all three stickers next to one item. When all youth have voted, count up the votes to see which issues rank as the highest priorities. If there is no clear winner, voting can be performed again on the top choices in order to isolate one, main priority. This will become the central issue for the group's research and action efforts.



Youth Leadership Roles

Establishing roles and responsibilities for youth participants is an important part of power sharing in participatory research and action. It is also very important to ensure youth receive adequate training and support in order to feel comfortable taking on new roles and learning and applying new skills. The following roles were established in the Youth Promotores Program, although they can be modified to fit other program models and needs.

Objectives: Youth will identify and assign themselves to leadership roles and working groups. Adults will share power with youth, who will be responsible for more tasks and activities and will develop greater ownership over the program. Youth will develop and apply new skills and stretch into new roles and responsibilities with ongoing adult guidance and support.

Materials & Preparation: Flip chart or white board and markers

Duration: 30 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker

Think, Pair, Share (15 minutes)

Begin this activity with a general discussion about leadership qualities and skills and youth experiences and interests. Have youth break up into pairs and discuss the following questions among themselves. Then come back together as a full group to share what each pair talked about and reflect on the responses.

- Who do you consider to be a leader? What qualities or skills do they have?
- What qualities or skills do you appreciate about yourself?
- What skills or experience would you like to gain?

Identifying & Assigning Youth Leadership Roles (15 minutes)

Transition from the general group discussion to a more focused discussion on specific roles and tasks that can be identified for the project. Have youth create a job description for each role outlining tasks and responsibilities. Then have them assign themselves to a position. With a team of adult allies, it can be helpful to have different adults work specifically to mentor different roles.

- What roles and responsibilities can we identify for our project?
- What are tasks being performed by adults that can be done by youth?
 - Meeting Scheduler and Group Reminder
 - Planner/Facilitator for Energizers/Icebreakers
 - Communications & Outreach Coordinator
 - Facilitation Team
 - Note Taker
 - Time Keeper
 - Research Advisory Committee Members
- What roles are you interested in?
- How do we decide who does what?
- Do we want to rotate between different roles? If so, after what period of time?

Chapter 4:

Developing a Research Agenda

Reflections from the Field

Lessons Learned:

- In developing the research agenda, a number of youth were not very interested in performing research online and cited “computer work” as their least favorite program activity. They also disliked always staying indoors and in the same school location for meetings and would have liked to get out into the community more. All of this valuable feedback should be taken into account when planning dynamic and engaging meetings and research agenda activities in the future.
- Youth overwhelming highlighted their involvement in two YCCA-sponsored events—the Thanksgiving Giveaway and the projectPREVENTION Fashion Show, a fundraiser supporting child abuse prevention programs—as their favorite activities during the program and moments when they felt particularly connected to the community. Interestingly, these events were not directly tied to the group’s YPAR campaign or research agenda. However, they made a lasting impression because they got participants out into their city, engaging with community members and flexing their advocacy muscles for worthy causes.
- During the Change vs. Charity activity, many participants seemed to like the idea of charity more than change because they felt it offered the possibility of a more immediate community impact. This may have been related to their positive assessments of the YCCA community events as well. As a facilitator, though, it is also important to bring up the potential limits of charity when trying to solve, rather than just ameliorate, community problems. The two approaches are also not mutually exclusive and can be worked on simultaneously to accomplish complementary goals. Analyzing the roots of a problem can help a group think through these points.
- The timeline activity worked quite well and underlined the stark reality of how much we were trying to accomplish and how little time we had to do it. Youth really got into plotting out the dates for our final set of meetings and were able to incorporate knowledge about conflicting academic commitments like finals and AP exams.

Youth *Promotores* in Their Own Words:

- “We actually had a plan this year.”
- “I like how we were involved with the community. I really like doing community service and just helping out, put in my part.”
- “I enjoyed the community giveaway because I felt we were actually interacting with the community.”
- “My favorite activity was the fashion show since I had fun and it was for a good cause.”

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

January 26th, 3:30pm-5:00pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (10 minutes)

Energizer (10 minutes)

Individual Free-Write (20 minutes)

- Personal writing exercise exploring homelessness and lack of community involvement
- Complete personal worksheet, exploring any questions, goals, and personal experiences you have related to homelessness and/or lack of community involvement
- Share back and group discussion

Theatrical Skits: Education, Advocacy & Activism (30 minutes)

- Break up into three groups
- Groups choose a theme, brainstorm and create a skit
- Perform skits and discuss as a group

Youth Leadership Roles (15 minutes)

- Clarify and divide up roles and responsibilities
 - Communication and School Coordination group
 - Notetaking group
 - Scheduler group
 - Energizer group
 - Facilitation group
- What other roles and responsibilities can we identify?

Next Steps & Evaluation (5 minutes)

- **OPEN FLOOR – Anyone is welcome to bring any topic to the table for discussion**
- Update on contacting former Sactown Heroes
- Next meeting date and time?
- Meeting evaluation

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

February 9th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (15 minutes)

- Name a person or an organization working to make positive change in your community

Check-In with Working Groups (15 minutes)

- Communication and School Coordination group: Erin
- Notetaking and Scheduler group: Logan and Jeneba
- Energizer and Facilitation group: Brandon

Progress Report: Communication and School Coordination Group (5 minutes)

- Report back on progress that's been made to identify and connect with Sactown Heroes

Summary of Last Week's Free Write: Notetaking Group (15 minutes)

- What were common questions, changes and goals, and personal experiences you have related to homelessness and/or lack of community involvement?
 - This helps us know what we want to do as a group, what we need to find out in order to accomplish it, and what resources we already have to help us get there
- Share any thoughts, discoveries, feelings you have about the topics and/or what you wrote
 - Is anything missing that we wanted to add to this list after thinking it over since last time?

Developing a Research Agenda: Where to Go from Here? (20 minutes)

- Where and how can we research the questions we want to know? Who can we speak with to find out more? Where can we look for information?
- Assigning roles and tasks

Energizer: Energizer Group (10 minutes)

Change vs. Charity Activity: Facilitation Group (30 minutes)

Next Steps & Evaluation (10 minutes)

- **OPEN FLOOR – Anyone is welcome to bring any topic to the table for discussion**
- Next meeting date and time?
- Do we all want to share contact information?
- Meeting evaluation

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

February 23rd, 3:30pm-5:00pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (10 minutes)

Updates on Research Agenda (10 minutes)

- What did you do since our last meeting?
- Did anyone make some progress on their research?
- What did you find? Anything interesting?

Break up into Research Groups (40 minutes)

- Communication and School Coordination group
 1. Sactown Heroes/ Researching Local Orgs – Magda, Shabnam
 2. Church Communication – Ellie, Nicole
- City and County Websites – Eric
- Ride Along/ Contacting Former Youth Promotores – Carmen
- Energizer/ Brainstorming goals group/ Visioning – Jenny, Murwa
- Share the progress made in all groups

Energizer: Jenny & Murwa (10 minutes)

Timeline Planning and Strategizing (15 minutes)

- When do we want to conduct research interviews?
- Looking into the future, what do we see happening and what do we want to see happen?
- Next step
 - What will we be doing before and at our next meeting?

Evaluation (5 minutes)

- **OPEN FLOOR – Anyone is welcome to bring any topic to the table for discussion**
- Next meeting date and time?
- Meeting evaluation

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

March 8th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (5 minutes)

Updates (10 minutes)

- Anything new we would like to share about our project?
- Assign Timekeeper role

Timeline Planning and Strategizing (45 minutes)

- Pick up where conversation left off in previous meeting
- How do you all feel about the pace of our process?
- What goals do we have that we can accomplish in this timeframe?
- When do we want to conduct research interviews?
- What do we need to do this month to get closer to our goals?
- Assign updated individual/group tasks
- Research Agenda 2016
 - Online Mapping Tools –
 - Survey/Interview People Dealing with Homelessness – Full Group
 - Ask Orgs Working with Homelessness – Shabnam, Nicole, Michael
 - Police Ride Along/Interview – Magda, Carmen
 - Connect with Churches: Nicole Ring – Ellie, Nicole
 - Organize Our Own Event – Full Group
 - City Officials: Ryan Collins – Carmen, Michael
 - Sactown Heroes – Communications Group
 - Former Youth Promotores – Carmen
 - County Homeless Coalition & Coordinator & Meetings (HPAC) –
 - City and County Website – Eric
 - Sacramento Efforts –
 - Contacting City Police Chief for Research Interview –

Energizer (15 minutes)

Research Teams (30 minutes)

- “Work, work, work, work, work.” -Rihanna :)

Meeting Evaluation (15 minutes)

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

March 18th, 3:30pm-5:00pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (20 minutes)

- Updates
 - Video contest
 - YCCA Fashion Show

Working Groups (30 minutes)

- Follow up on to-do list from last meeting
 - Fix Facebook name
 - Upload pictures we took on Tuesday to Facebook
 - Resend messages to Sactown Heroes contacts
 - Individually brainstorm what our video documentation will look like and bring all necessary equipment
 - Connect with Ryan Collins
 - Research videos on YouTube of advocacy/activism/education related to homelessness and come prepared to share
 - Schedule police ride alongs
 - Have Fun!!!!

Energizer (15 minutes)

Next Steps (20 minutes)

Meeting Evaluation (5 minutes)

Research Questions & Goals

Once an issue has been identified, the group can begin to think about research questions they would like to answer and research and action goals they would like to achieve. Combining an individual free write exercise with group discussion gives every youth participant multiple opportunities to contribute to the process.

Objectives: Youth will share their questions, goals, and personal experiences related to the issue they have decided to focus on. This will begin the process of narrowing down research questions and potential action strategies for the project.

Materials & Preparation: Free write worksheets, flip chart or white board and markers

Duration: 40 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper

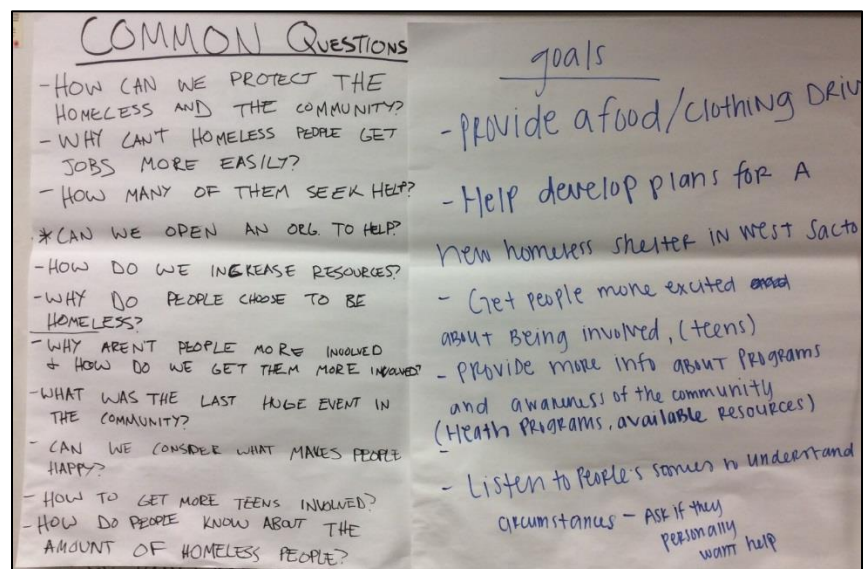
Personal Free Write (10 minutes)

Youth are given time to complete the free write worksheet, exploring any questions, goals, or personal experiences they have related to the issue they will be focusing on.

Group Share & Discussion (30 minutes)

After completing the worksheets, youth have an opportunity to share any thoughts, discoveries, or feelings they have about the topic and/or what they wrote with the rest of the group. In order to allow for the sharing of difficult personal experiences related to community issues and problems, it is extremely important that the group has established a safe, supportive space for challenging and emotional conversations. The worksheets are then collected by the note taker(s) and the answers are compiled into a single list for each question on either flip chart paper or a white board. Potential discussion prompts include:

- What were some common themes and answers?
- Is anything missing that you want to add to these lists after thinking it over and reviewing the rest of the responses?



Free Write Worksheet

What are some questions you have about this issue? What would you like to find out about it?

What are some goals that you would like to accomplish as we research and take action on this issue? What changes would you like to see take place as a result of your work?

What personal experiences, if any, do you have with this issue?

Role Playing Skits: Education, Advocacy & Activism

This activity is useful as youth identify an issue in their community and begin to think about what they hope to achieve, the types of action they want to take, and the end products they would like to create. Having the young people act out the scenarios by creating their own theatrical skits is a way to make the activity more fun, creative and dynamic. This is adapted from the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) curriculum by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

Objectives: Youth will understand and be able to articulate the differences between actions focused on education, advocacy, and activism and the distinct roles of those working as educators, advocates, and activists. Youth will be able to apply this knowledge to their own project as they consider the types of activities they would like to engage in, the roles they would like to play, and the types of outcomes they hope to achieve.

Materials & Preparation: Definitions of education, advocacy, and activism; enough Education, Advocacy, and Activism Role Play Scenarios for three groups

Duration: 55 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper

Introduction (10 minutes)

Have youth brainstorm different approaches to action. Discuss how many of these approaches can be categorized as either education, advocacy, or activism. Explain that we will be exploring these categories in this activity through role playing and skits in order to better understand each one and think about the types of action we would like to take as a group.

Preparation for Skits (15 minutes)

Divide youth into three groups and give each group a different copy of the Role Play Scenarios. Scenarios can be found in the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning curriculum located here: <https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/YELL%20Handbook.pdf>. One group will be focused on education, one will be focused on advocacy and one will be focused on activism. Give each group time to read their definitions and hover between the groups to make sure everyone understands their particular approach to action. Then allow the groups to develop a short skit that demonstrates their action approach, either using the scenario that is provided or coming up with another on their own.

Performance (20 minutes)

Each group has time to perform their skit. After each performance, have the other groups come up with a definition for the action approach that was just acted out. Also, have them describe how a person might act and what they might say if they were engaged in that type of action.

Discussion & Reflection (10 minutes)

Review the definitions from the Role Playing Scenarios sheets and those that were created by the other groups to ensure that everyone understands each action strategy. Potential reflection questions include:

- What are the advantages and limitations of each different action strategy?
- Which one interests you the most? Why?
- Does anyone have experience with any of these action approaches? If so, can you talk about what you did and how it went?
- Which approach do you think would be most appropriate and effective for our project? Why?



Change vs. Charity

This is a great exercise for youth as they identify an issue in their community and begin to think about how they would like to address it. This activity provides a critical examination of a couple different approaches to community action, allowing young people to explore their respective benefits and limitations. This activity is adapted from the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) curriculum by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

Objectives: Youth will understand and be able to articulate the differences between activities focused on change and those focused on charity. Youth will be able to apply this knowledge to their own project as they consider the types of activities they would like to engage in and the types of outcomes they hope to achieve.

Materials & Preparation: Flip chart or white board and markers.

Duration: 40 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker

Opening Brainstorm (10 minutes)

Have youth generate a list of people and organizations working to make positive change in their community. Have the note taker record all the responses on the white board or flip chart.

Think, Pair, Share (20 minutes)

As a full group, give youth a few examples of activities focused on charity and those focused on change. You can use the main community issue identified by the group as a starting point—such as homelessness—but you can also generate examples using other common issues like youth unemployment or hunger. The following is an example:

Issue	Change	Charity
Homelessness	Speak at a city council meeting in support of a new housing program benefitting people dealing with homelessness.	Organize a clothing drive and donate the proceeds to a local homeless shelter.

Once youth have a clear understanding of the distinction between the two, have them break up into pairs and come up with examples of their own. They can use other issues identified in their community as a starting point and think of examples from throughout the world as well. After the pairs have had a chance to brainstorm their own lists, have them share back some of their ideas with the whole group and have the note taker record their responses.

Closing & Reflection (10 minutes)

The following are examples of potential reflective questions to wrap-up this activity:

- What do you think are the differences between change and charity?
- Looking back at the examples we listed of local people and organizations, do more people seem to be working towards change or charity in our community? Why do you think that is?
- Which approach seems more powerful in trying to address the issues that we have identified? Why?
- What are the strengths and limitations of each?
- How might these two approaches work in combination with one another?
- How does this help us as we think about our research and community work?



Research Agenda

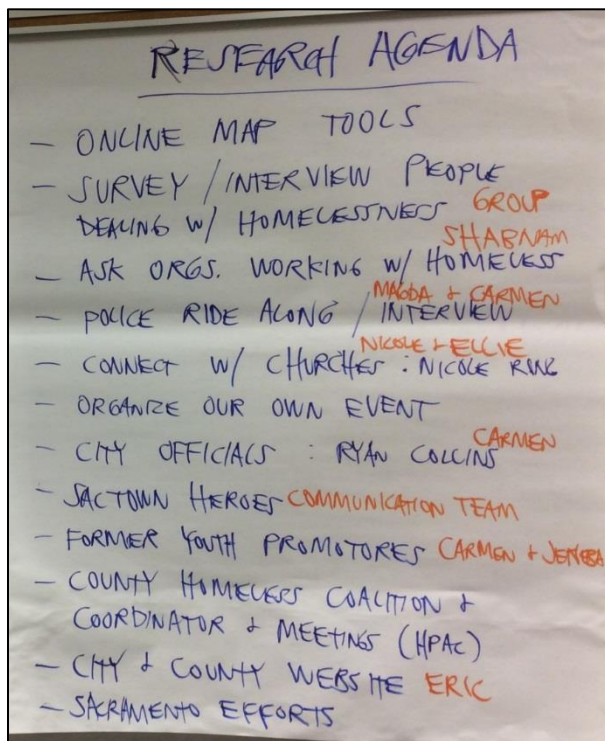
Once an issue has been identified and a list of research questions has been generated by the group, it is time to formulate a research agenda. This is an important step for determining the best methods and sources for answering your group's research questions. This information can then be used to plan out the roles and tasks that will be needed to accomplish your agenda.

Objectives: Youth will utilize their list of research questions in order to formulate a research agenda comprised of potential information sources and research methods. Youth will assign themselves to various roles and tasks identified in the agenda in order to help accomplish their overall research objectives.

Materials & Preparation: List of previously-generated research questions, flip chart or white board and markers.

Duration: 30 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker



Developing a Research Agenda (20 minutes)

With the group's research questions serving as a jumping off point, have youth brainstorm and generate a list of potential information sources and research methods that might help them answer their questions. Potential prompting questions include:

- Where and how can we research the questions we want to answer?
- Who are people in the community who might know something about this topic?
- What are other potential sources of information about this issue?
- What are the potential benefits and limitations of using a survey? Of conducting interviews? Of doing research online?

Assigning Roles & Tasks (10 minutes)

Once a list of sources and methods has been created, have youth volunteer for specific roles and tasks. This is a great opportunity to explore the power of social capital and social networks by seeing if youth have any personal connections to any of the information sources, such as local institutions, community leaders, elected officials, businesses, etc. This is also a great opportunity for youth to develop new skills and stretch into new roles and responsibilities.

Project Timeline

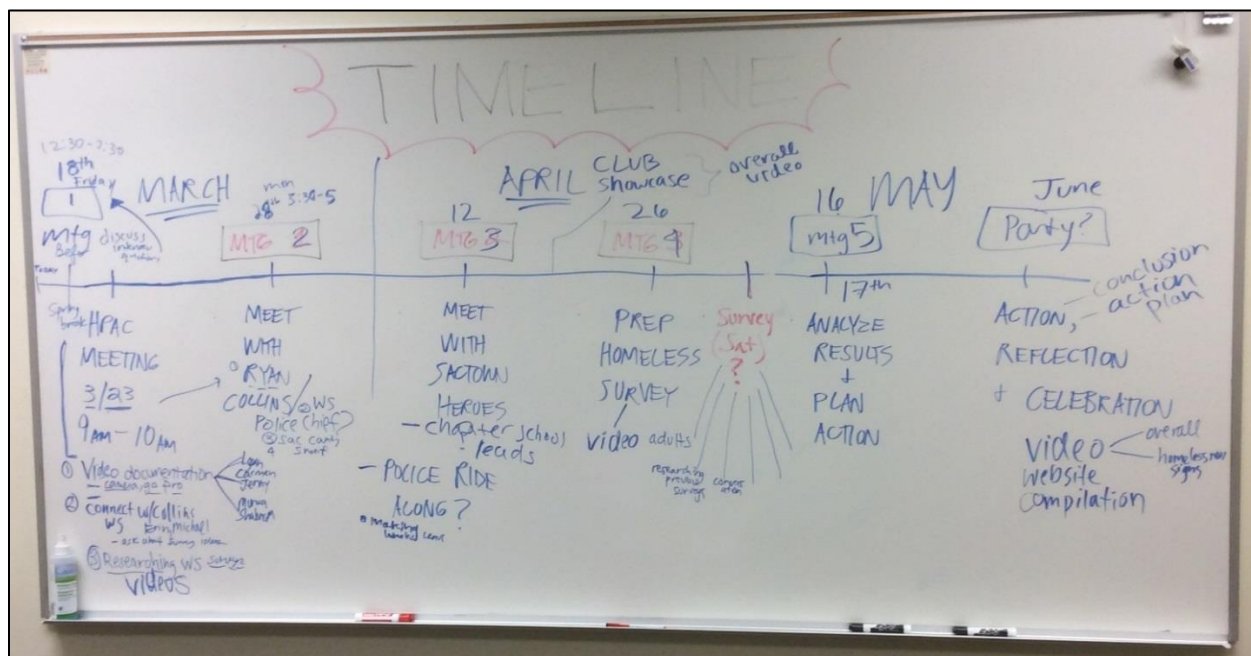
Creating a project timeline and having an open discussion about time commitment and expectations can be a beneficial exercise at many stages of a program's development. With the Youth Promotores Program, a limited monthly meeting schedule and ambitious goals made it very important to prioritize and plan activities and be realistic about the group's scope of work. This was especially helpful after the research issue was identified and the group's research agenda was established. This is a valuable tool for setting clear and achievable expectations within a specific timeframe.

Objectives: Youth will develop and agree upon a timeline charting upcoming group activities, events, and milestones. Youth will create a realistic work plan that balances group objectives with an agreed upon timeframe and commitment levels.

Materials & Preparation: A white board and markers are best for creating a large timeline, although a flip chart or poster paper can also be used.

Duration: 30 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker



Introduction (5 minutes)

The facilitator explains the purpose of the activity and the importance of creating and agreeing upon a clear schedule and scope for the group's work together. Having clear expectations keeps everyone on the same page and allows us to measure our progress and adjust our course as needed. This exercise also helps us understand as a group what is possible within the given timeframe of the program and prioritize action items based on this analysis.

Timeline Planning & Discussion (20 minutes)

Rather than creating an entire timeline together with the youth from scratch, it can be more beneficial, effective, and efficient to have something concrete for participants to work from. Having a basic timeline already laid out gives the conversation a solid foundation to rest on and allows for clearer discussion points. This basic timeline can be created by plotting out the upcoming meetings you expect will occur within the given timeframe and filling it in with key activities or events that have already been identified by the group, or key remaining steps in the inquiry process. This can help demonstrate how realistic a scope of work is given a specific time commitment and can lead to a fruitful discussion about planning, priorities and end goals. Potential discussion questions include:

- What goals do we have that we can accomplish in this timeframe?
- What do we need to do this month to get closer to our goals?
- How do you feel about the pace of our process?
- Are we giving ourselves enough time to do everything we hope to do together? Why or why not? If we are not giving ourselves enough time, what can we do about that?
- Are there any items on the timeline you would like to change or remove? Are there any items you would like to add?

Closing & Reflection (5 minutes)

This activity provides a good opportunity to discuss or revisit questions about time commitment, expectations and desired program outcomes. Potential reflective questions to wrap-up this exercise include:

- What was your initial reaction to seeing our group's activities all laid out like this?
- How do you feel about the timeline and plan now that we have discussed it and modified it together?
- What do you think will be the easiest things to accomplish? Why?
- What do you think will be the hardest things to accomplish? Why?
- What upcoming event or activity are you most looking forward to and why?

Chapter 5:

Research Methods & Tools

Reflections from the Field

Lessons Learned:

- Research meetings with key people in the community working on the homelessness issue were a good way to help clarify what we were doing and where we fit in, while also providing a more nuanced perspective of the issue itself. This also helped the group “cut the issue”—narrowing its focus to move from a broad “problem” to more specific, actionable issues that could be researched and addressed.
- Youth really embraced the research meeting format and did an excellent job planning, running, and evaluating their meeting with West Sacramento’s Homeless Outreach and Services Coordinator. Participants liked that they were in charge and running the show. They also liked that this was a “fun,” “less tiring,” and interactive research method, and they greatly preferred it over computer-based work.
- It was very challenging to get youth to conduct any research tasks on their own outside of the scheduled meetings, despite everyone agreeing to do this. Dedicated research time had to be set aside during meetings for much progress to be made.
- We really needed way more time for the survey drafting session and didn’t really do this activity justice. We could have unpacked the different types of survey questions and their strengths and limitations a bit more. This would have helped us clarify the final formatting of the questions that were generated too, since it wasn’t always clear which format would work best for each survey question the youth created. We also didn’t really talk about next steps or what to do with this information, although the underlying assumption is that this work will continue with next year’s cohort.
- Youth were really energized by the idea of creating videos to document their work and progress. They adopted this tool fairly late in the year, so we did not have adequate time for planning, strategizing, or training. However, there is a lot of potential for incorporating this work more fully in the future, since youth were really into it and already had some impressive video editing skills.

Youth *Promotores* in Their Own Words:

- “Let us call the important people. Because they know you but they don’t know us.”
- “I think [youth had the most power and control] when we did the interview...cause we organized the questions and then you guys just helped us guide through them.”
- “I learned more about what’s going on in West [Capital] and I had a more clear interpretation of how different my life is.”
- “I learned more about the community. I didn’t think of homelessness as a huge issue.”

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

March 29th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (10 minutes)

Updates (5 minutes)

Planning for Research Meeting with Ryan Collins (60 minutes)

- Discuss the process of the meeting
- Assign roles
- Create the Youth Promotores group credential
- Draft the meeting purpose
- Make a list of questions

Energizer (15 minutes)

Research Meeting Practice Run & Role Playing (20 Minutes)

- Erin will role play as Ryan Collins

Meeting Evaluation (10 minutes)

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

April 12th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (20 minutes)

Research Meeting Practice Run & Role Playing (35 Minutes)

- Review role assignments and meeting components
- Perform another practice run before invitee arrives

Research Meeting with Ryan Collins (45 minutes)

- Follow research meeting agenda created during the last meeting
 - Introductions
 - Credential
 - Meeting purpose
 - Questions
 - Summary and close

Debrief Research Meeting (10 minutes)

Next Steps and Evaluation (10 minutes)

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

April 26th, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (15 minutes)

Updates (20 minutes)

- Debrief YCCA Fashion Show
- Prep for River City High School Showcase: April 26th, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Career Fair: May 6th
- Senior Scholarship Formal Award Ceremony (sashes or pins): May 24th, 6pm
- Brandon's Presentation at UC Davis: May 25th, 12pm
- NorCal Homeless Round Table: May 26th, 9am-3:30pm
- Bank of America Summer Internship

Planning for Future Meetings (20 minutes)

- Strategy and time management for remaining meetings
- Possibility and/or interest in summer meetings/activities?
 - Continued research meetings?
 - Recruitment for next year's cohort?

Energizer (15 minutes)

Survey Design (40 minutes)

- Discuss purpose and formats for survey research tools
- Create survey questions and protocol to be used with people dealing with homelessness

Next Steps & Evaluation (10 minutes)

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

May 17th, 3:30pm-5:00pm

Arrive, Mingle & Eat (15 minutes)

- Updates
 - Debrief Career Fair
 - Grant Application with Sac Republic for \$20,000
 - Senior Awards Night
 - NorCal Homeless Round Table

Create Initial Draft of Survey (30 minutes)

- What is our goal/purpose and what do we want to accomplish with the results?
 - Who is our audience and who is the target population?
- Review examples of homeless surveys
- Review types of survey questions
 - Yes or No; Scale; Multiple Choice or Rank; Open Ended
- Survey length?
- Form pairs and start generating questions
- Share back and compile questions
- Finalize initial draft and debrief

Energizer: Jenny & Murwa (10 minutes)

Brainstorming location, event, and activities for our last meeting 6/11?

Video for Brandon's UC Davis Presentation (30 minutes)

- We can have video, audio, photos—anything we'd like
- What is the theme/statement and what do we want to say?
- Audience?

Next Steps (5 minutes)

- Next meeting on 5/27 from 12:30 to 2pm for our focus group evaluation
- Reminder: Upload all photos and videos to YoloYPCI google docs

Research Meeting

This activity is essentially a group-led interview that allows youth to plan, run, and evaluate the entire process. This is a great method for collective research work that simultaneously incorporates leadership development and skills building for participants. As a community organizing strategy, having participants run the meeting themselves and share a glimpse of their work with the interviewee is also an effective means of demonstrating and flexing their collective power. This format was adapted from a community organizing curriculum by PICO California.

Objectives: Youth will plan, run, and evaluate a research interview with a key informant. Youth will develop and practice leadership, facilitation, public speaking, planning, interviewing, and evaluation skills. The group will also be able to flex its collective power and demonstrate its organizational capabilities.

Materials & Preparation: For prep and practice, sample agenda and agenda templates (flip chart or white board and markers can also be used to create and fill-in a large agenda template as a group). For research meeting, enough completed meeting agendas for all participants, flip chart or white board and markers for plus/delta evaluation.

Duration: at least 1 hour for prep and practice, generally 1 hour for the research meeting itself

Roles: Chairperson; note taker; people to share the group credential, purpose of the meeting, and testimony, and ask the questions

Introduction (10 minutes)

Explain and discuss the purpose and format of a research meeting. The general goals are to learn more about the group's target issue, build a relationship with the key informant, identify other potential informants through snowball sampling, and develop skills and experience. The format is designed to be planned and run by youth participants in a way that allows them to stretch into new roles, expand their skills, and flex a bit of their collective power.

Drafting Agenda Items (40 minutes)

Participants should create all of the key agenda items themselves. This can either be done simultaneously broken up in separate groups, or it can be performed one after the other together as a single group. Information can be recorded on agenda templates or a flip chart/white board.

- **Group Credential**
 - A group credential will remain the same from one meeting to the next, so it will not have to be redrafted every time a research meeting is planned. A credential is similar to a group mission statement, explaining who the group is, what they are doing and what they hope to accomplish. However, it is also an opportunity to demonstrate collective power by highlighting how many people the group represents, who they are working with, and generally why they are important and should be taken seriously.
- **Purpose of the Meeting**
 - The purpose of the meeting will also usually be similar from one research meeting

to the next, although it can vary based on the informant. This is an opportunity to share the group's goals and objectives for the meeting and what they hope to accomplish.

- Testimony
 - Groups can choose whether or not they want to include one or more personal testimonies in the meeting's agenda. This is an opportunity for a group member to share a short, personal story about how the issue they are researching has impacted their life and why it is important to them. This is an effective method for bringing some humanity and emotion into the meeting to highlight the significance of the work the group is engaged in.
- Questions
 - Finally, the list of interview questions is an opportunity for the group to find out more about both their key informant and their research topic.

Assigning Roles (10 minutes)

All roles for the team conducting the research meeting should be thoroughly explained before youth decide how and where they would like to contribute to the collective effort.

- Chairperson
 - The main facilitator and time keeper for the meeting. Performs the initial introduction to start the meeting and welcome the informant, keeps the meeting on track and on time, provides transitions between each section, troubleshoots, and provides the summary and close at the end of the meeting.
- Note Taker
 - Records responses to all of the group's questions and any other pertinent information that is shared during the course of the meeting.
- Reader for the Group Credential
- Reader for the Purpose of the Meeting
- Testimony
 - Drafts and reads a personal testimony.
- Questions
 - Remaining participants generally take turns asking the list of interview questions.

Research Meeting Practice Run & Role Playing (20 Minutes)

Once the meeting agenda is finalized and roles are assigned, performing a quick practice run of the agenda is an important step. This allows youth to get a feel for their roles and how the meeting will run in a safe, supportive space with no pressure. Working through the performance jitters ahead of time through role playing is always an important strategy to help youth become comfortable with new roles, skills and tasks. For this exercise, someone needs to play the part of the interviewee (generally an adult ally or someone without an assigned role in the agenda). To save time, the group can just ask their questions in order and skip role playing the answers. As always, it is beneficial to do a quick plus/delta evaluation after the practice run to learn from and improve upon the experience.

Sample Research Meeting Agenda

Research Meeting with Ryan Collins, Homeless Coordinator, Yolo County

Tuesday, April 12, 2015 at 1:30pm

Duration: 45 Minutes

- **Meeting Chairperson: SHABNAM**
- **Note Takers: ELLIE & NICOLE**

Introductions (5 minutes)

- Youth Promotores introduce themselves

Credential: MAGDA (2.5 minutes)

- We are the Youth Promotores from the Yolo County Children's Alliance based here at River City High School. Since we all live in West Sacramento, we have come together to identify and solve some problems we see in our community. This year our main focus has been homelessness and lack of community involvement.

Purpose of Meeting: ERIC (2.5 minutes)

The purpose of tonight's research meeting is to:

- Understand how the city approaches the issue of homelessness.
- Gain knowledge of different perspectives and ideas of things we can do.
- Form a relationship with the city to establish a connection between youth and city officials.

Questions (30 minutes)

- Can you give us an overview of your role in the community?
- What is the city doing and what are their future plans to deal with this issue?
- We heard that the living conditions in the hotels are not up to standard, what is the city doing about that?
- From your perspective, what are the biggest causes of homelessness in our community and how do you think they should be approached?
- We would like to survey some of the homeless population. Do you have any input or advice?

- Do you know of any past surveys? Where would be the best place to distribute ours?
- In your opinion what would be our most effective project strategy, in regards to West Sacramento homelessness?
- Do you know of any leaders within the homeless community who we should speak with?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with us before we end this meeting?

Summary & Close: SHABNAM (5 minutes)

Meeting Debrief & Evaluation (after Ryan Collins leaves)



Youth *promotores* conducting a research meeting

Research Meeting Agenda Template

River City Youth Promotores

Research Meeting with _____

[Day, Date & Time]

Research Meeting Agenda

Duration: _____ Minutes

- **Meeting Chairperson:** _____
- **Note Taker:** _____

Introductions (____ minutes)

- Group members introduce themselves

Credential: _____ (____ minutes)

Purpose of Meeting: _____ (____ minutes)

- The purpose of today's research meeting is to:
 - _____

 - _____

Testimony: _____ (____ minutes)

Questions (____ minutes)

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

- _____ ?

Summary & Close: CHAIRPERSON (____ minutes)

- _____

Meeting Debrief & Evaluation (immediately after the person leaves)

Survey Design

In addition to interviews and research meetings, surveys are another research method that can be very effective in a participatory project. This activity represents the first phase of survey design as youth work together to draft initial questions. This should then be followed up with activities meant to organize and test the questions before finalizing a draft that can be used in their research. This activity is adapted from the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) curriculum by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

Objectives: Youth will understand the purpose and formats of survey research, along with the strengths and limitations of this method. Youth will work together to create a draft of a survey protocol for use in their own research endeavors.

Materials & Preparation: Flipchart or white board and markers; pens and paper for pair activity.

Duration: 50 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker

What is a Survey? (10 minutes)

Discuss the purpose of surveys and the various forms they can take. Ask youth what types of surveys they have taken and what kinds of surveys they are familiar with.

- A survey is a way to gather information from a group of people using the same set of standard questions.
- Survey questions generally fall into four categories: “Yes or No” questions; “Scale” questions; “Multiple Choice” or “Rank” questions; and “Open-ended” questions.
 - What are the strengths and limitations of each type of question?
 - Why would you use one type and not another?
- What are the strengths and limitations of survey research?
 - What questions are surveys good at answering and what questions do they have trouble answering?
 - What can surveys do that interviews cannot and vice versa?

Survey Protocol Basics (15 minutes)

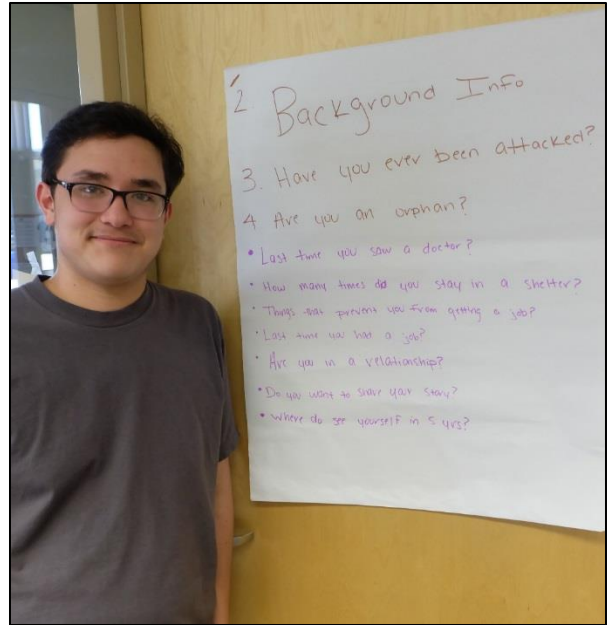
When creating a survey protocol, it is important to first answer a number of key questions as a group. The following are considerations that should be discussed with youth and agreed upon:

- What is our goal/purpose for this survey?
- What do we want to accomplish with the results?
- Who is our audience and who is the target population?
- How long should the survey be and how long should it take someone to do it?
- Does it need to be in any specific languages or written a certain way in order to be accessible to the population we want to survey?

Drafting Survey Questions (20 minutes)

To generate initial survey questions, have youth work in pairs using the Think, Pair, Share format.

Many examples of surveys that have already been created and conducted can be found online, and it can be helpful to provide youth with these examples to work from. Have participants either critique and modify existing surveys or work from scratch, depending on what is available for your focus issue and how you want to structure this activity. Be sure youth utilize the full spectrum of question types in order to make sure the format fits the information they want to collect. Once the pairs have each generated a list of questions, have them report back to the whole group and have the note taker compile a full list of all the questions on a flip chart or white board.



Closing & Reflection (5 minutes)

Once youth have generated an initial list of survey questions as a group, some potential reflective questions include:

- Do the questions we created match up with our purpose and goals for this survey? Why or why not?
- Are the questions we created appropriate for the population we want to research? Why or why not?

Chapter 6:

Reflection & Evaluation

Reflections from the Field

Lessons Learned:

- It is very important for critical, open dialogue and evaluations to become established as normalized aspects of the program from the beginning.
- Although it was scheduled for longer, the evaluation focus group session only took about 45 minutes to complete. This felt like a good length and kept participants' attention and energy just long enough. Overall, the level of participation and the input that the youth provided was quite impressive. They had very thoughtful responses to all of the questions and just about everyone gave a lot of feedback and input.
- Somewhat surprisingly, the youth were not very critical of the group's internal power dynamics and the levels of control shared by youth and the adult allies. Participants were not too concerned about seeing further leadership and facilitation roles taken on by youth, and overall they expressed lots of satisfaction with the organization and division of labor of this year's group. However, pushing them a bit further beyond their current comfort level is still important for the next cohort, especially for any continuing leaders from this year's group.
- Youth engagement and critical consciousness levels were boosted for *promotores* as a result of their involvement in the group. Almost all of the youth in the evaluation session appreciated learning more about their community through their work as *promotores*. The program helped youth see beyond prevailing stereotypes and become more knowledgeable about key issues in West Sacramento and provided some opportunities for putting that knowledge into practice. Participants also mentioned being more involved in the community as a key outcome.

Youth *Promotores* in Their Own Words:

- "It's only our second year but we still got a lot done this year."
- "I got to meet a lot of people too and I learned how to make this group better."
- "I liked interacting and helping out in my community."
- "I wish we could have actually interacted with the [homeless] community instead of just talking about it."
- "I would give us more time to accomplish everything/start the program earlier."

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

May 27th, 12:30pm-2:00pm

Introduction, Instructions & Food (15 minutes)

- Explain the purpose of the focus group and what we will be doing
- Go over any concerns related to audio recording the proceedings, confidentiality, research results, etc.

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

- Discussion with the entire group of youth facilitated by the adult allies.

Written World Café Session (25 minutes)

- Questions are written on sheets of poster paper and placed around the room
- Youth rotate between each one, writing down their answers in colored marker and then switching every 5 minutes until they've visited and answered every station

Physical Spectrum Activity (20 minutes)

- Youth are asked to stand on a point in a line corresponding to their answers to scale questions
- Probing and clarifying questions are used as well to prompt full group reflection and discussion.

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

- Closing discussion with the entire group of youth

Plus/Delta Evaluations

Continual reflection and evaluation is a key component of this work and an important group norm to institute early on. This simple and short evaluation format can be used in a variety of situations to provide programmatic feedback and allow participants to think critically about their contributions and the work they are engaged in. During the Youth Promotores Program, evaluations were generally done at the end of each meeting and after key events or activities.

Objectives: Youth will engage in critical reflection, providing feedback on program meetings, activities, and events. Future endeavors will be strengthened based on youth voice and initiative.

Materials & Preparation: Flipchart or white board and markers.

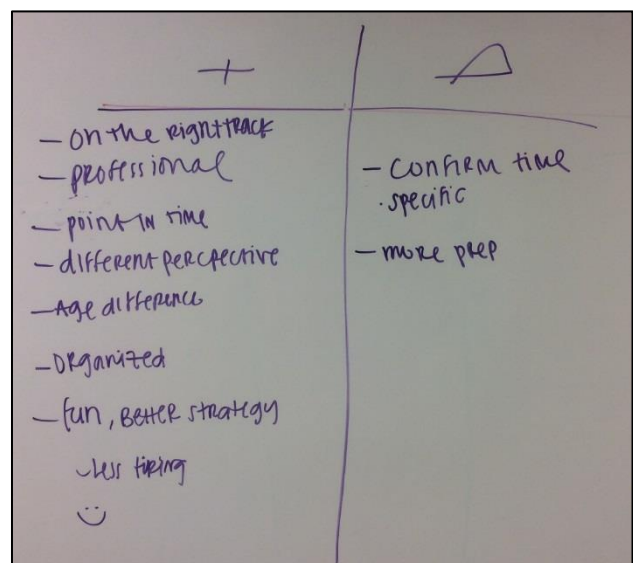
Duration: 5 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, note taker

Reflection & Evaluation (5 minutes)

The note taker draws a basic chart on the board with two columns. One column is marked with a “+” (Plus) symbol and the other is marked with a “ Δ ” (Delta) symbol. The facilitator explains to the group that the “+” symbol signifies positive things that we liked about the meeting/activity and things that went well, while the “ Δ ” symbol signifies things that we would like to change for next time. Rather than using “-” or negative, this evaluation format substitutes the Greek letter delta, “ Δ ”, which is a symbol that is often used to signify “change.” Focusing on change rather than categorizing things as negative allows for more constructive criticism and also implies steps that can be taken to improve the group’s processes and work moving forward.

Starting with the “+” side, the facilitator asks participants to share anything that they liked about the meeting/activity or that they think went well. The note taker records all responses on the corresponding chart. Once there are no more responses for that side, the facilitator then moves on to the “ Δ ” side, asking participants to share anything that they think could be changed and improved for next time. Again, the note taker records all responses. This information can then be used for a quick reflection and discussion as a group and the feedback should also be incorporated in the next planning meeting. Past evaluations can also be reintroduced to the group at a later date to reflect and measure how well feedback is being used to improve the program and its processes.



Program Debrief & Evaluation Focus Group

This activity was used as a final participatory evaluation at the end of the Youth Promotores Program. Questions and formatting can be adapted to fit a variety of situations and program goals, though.

Objectives: Youth will engage in critical reflection and dialogue related to their overall experiences in the program. Youth will provide feedback on program design, activities, objectives, and accomplishments that can be used to evaluate the program's impact and help dictate its future direction. The program will be strengthened based on youth voice and initiative.

Materials & Preparation: Agenda and list of questions for facilitator(s); large sheets of blank poster paper; enough colored permanent markers for all participants; audio/video recorder (can be useful for notetaking purposes, although use of these devices should be discussed with and agreed upon by participants beforehand).

Duration: 1 hour and 20 minutes

Roles: Facilitator(s), note taker, timekeeper

Introduction & Instructions (5 minutes)

Facilitator explains the purpose of the focus group and what participants will be doing and answers any questions or concerns.

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Facilitated discussion with the entire group of youth.

- What were the expectations of this group and what did you all set out to accomplish at the beginning of this year?
- What did we do and what goals did we accomplish?
- What did we not do that you really wanted us to do?

Gallery Walk (25 minutes)

Each of the following questions is written on a different sheet of poster paper and placed around the room. Youth are given colored markers and rotate between each station, writing down their answers and switching every 5 minutes until they've visited and answered every question. Afterward, participants can do another stroll around the room, reading the other answers that were left by their colleagues. This can then be used to generate further reflection and discussion as a full group regarding common themes that they noticed, things that surprised them or stood out to them, etc.

- What was your favorite activity or discussion? Why?
- What was your least favorite activity or discussion? Why?
- What did you learn from your participation in the program this year?
- What did you like the best about this experience?
- What is the one thing you would have improved about this program or your experience?

Physical Spectrum Scale Questions (20 minutes)

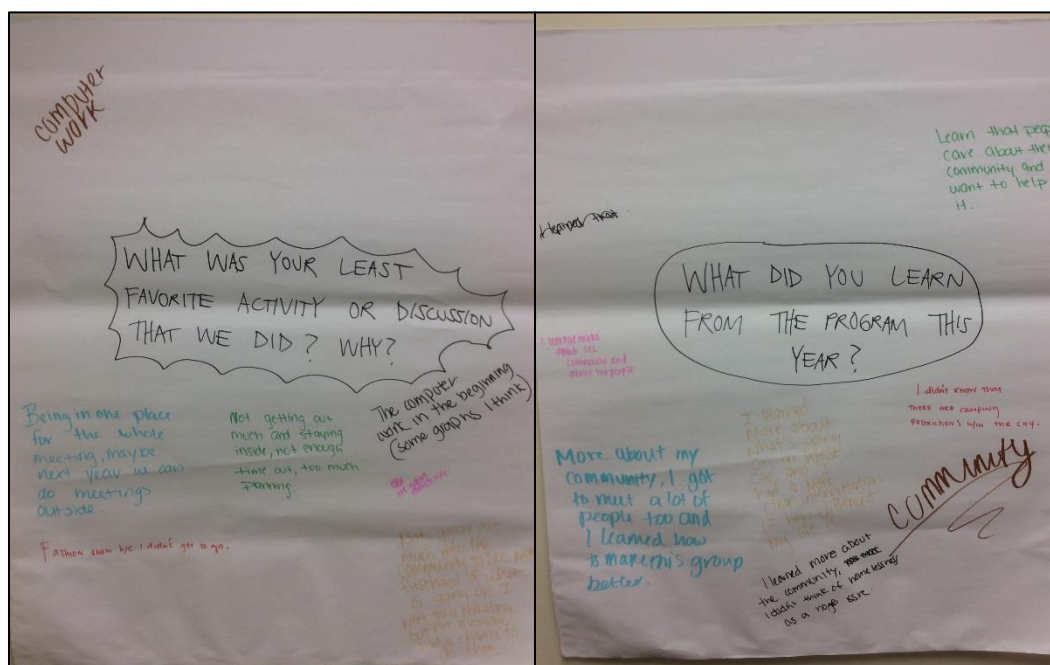
An imaginary line is created in the space, with one side of the room designated as the low end of the scale for respondents' answers and the other end of the room designated as the high end of the scale. As a full group, youth are asked to get out of their seats and stand on a point in this imaginary line corresponding to their answers to the following "1-10 scale" questions. Probing and clarifying questions are used in between as well to prompt full group reflection and discussion while participants are standing in their positions.

- Forming a line on a scale from 1-10, how much control do you think the youth had over the program this year?
 - Why did you pick that number?
 - Where did you feel that the youth had the most power and control?
 - Where did you feel that the adults had the most power and control?
 - Where would you have liked to see more youth voice, participation and leadership? Why?
- Forming a line on a scale from 1-10, how much control would you like youth to have over this program next year?
 - Why did you pick that number?
 - How could more power and control go to the youth next year?

Group Discussion and Wrap-Up (15 minutes)

Facilitated closing discussion with the entire group of youth.

- What advice would you give to young people joining the group for the first time next year?
- What advice would you give to the adult allies helping to run the program next year?
- What else should we know?



Chapter 7:

Celebration

Reflections from the Field

Lessons Learned:

- While this documentation does not include energizers or icebreakers, these activities were important components of our meetings and were thoroughly enjoyed by both the youth participants and adult allies. It is always important to have fun, and these activities provide a great way to build relationships, foster a safe space, and make meetings more engaging and dynamic.
- The level of youth attendance and involvement remained high and consistent throughout the program's nine months.

Youth *Promotores* in Their Own Words:

- "I feel that being in this group it helped me look at everything at a different perspective."
- "I thought this year was gonna be like last year all over again, to be honest...But, yeah, I'd say my expectations were wrong. Which was good. Yeah, we were able to focus ourselves to a common goal. We were able to decide what the club was gonna be about and how we were gonna do it so, yeah, I'm happy that my expectations were wrong."

Youth Promotores Meeting Agenda

June 14th, 10:00am-4:00pm

Food & Fun at the Sacramento State Aquatic Center (5 hours)

- Kayak and paddleboard rentals

Celebration & Appreciation Activities (20 minutes)

- Head, Heart and Feet Activity
- Review and share each "Letter to My Future Self"

Head, Heart & Feet

This debrief and evaluation activity is particularly useful as a team-building and appreciation exercise. It can be used at the end of a regular meeting or activity, but also makes for a poignant closing reflection at a program's completion. This activity was adapted from a curriculum by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.

Objectives: Youth will reflect on and share what they gained from their experiences in the meeting/program and what they learned from one another.

Materials & Preparation: If the group desires to take notes and record responses from this activity, then markers and a large flip chart are needed. This activity can also just be done as an oral reflection without any notetaking.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes, depending on the size of the group

Roles: Facilitator, possibly note taker

Group Share (20 minutes)

Participants form a circle and take turns reflecting on their experiences using the following questions. Facilitators can either have participants share answers to all three prompts or let them choose what they share, depending on group size, dynamics, and comfort level.

- Head: Share something that you learned from this program.
- Heart: Share one way that this program made you feel.
- Feet: Share something that you will do when you leave here as a result of this program.

Closing & Reflection (10 minutes)

Group debrief at the end of the activity to discuss and process what was shared.

- What did you hear during this activity?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What were some common things that came up a lot?
- Given what was shared, where do we go from here and what are some possible next steps?

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