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Kids These Days: Increasing Youth Engagement in Community Heritage and Social Justice Through the Implementation of a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model

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Kids These Days:

Increasing YOUTH ENGAGEMENT in COMMUNITY HERITAGE and SOCIAL JUSTICE through the IMPLEMENTATION of a YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EMPOWERMENT MODEL

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KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

A Co-Authored Dissertation submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
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Dissertation Committee

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Keith Miller, Ph.D.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this co-authored, qualitative, action research study was to examine how to empower youth to become active participants in their communities. Citizen engagement in community and public life is vital to a healthy democracy and young people have a unique place in community citizenry, but are often dismissed or excluded from decision-making. The research team developed a model, the Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM), to guide youth through a process of identifying and engaging a community heritage or social justice need in their community. The team assembled a guidebook of activities to engage groups in difficult self, group, and community work. To test the model, each of the six members of the research team implemented YPEM to engage youth in six locations throughout the United States. The members of each group represent a diverse sampling of the country and include tribal, undocumented, rural, suburban, and urban youth from low income or underserved populations. Researchers collected interview and observation data to identify themes and strategies that support community youth leadership. The model seeks to cultivate youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment and to assist group mentors with this process. The results of the six groups highlight the importance of youth leadership, trust and safety, partnerships, and multidimensional mentorship. These observations led to the development of an updated version of YPEM, which includes the four main observations and strategies that proved successful in the field.
Dedicated to the young people everywhere who want to change the world.
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MELANIE CANADAY

My heartfelt thanks go to my family, who supported me throughout this process. First to my mother, who cooked for me, ran my errands, encouraged me and listened to my numerous struggles. Without you, I am not sure if I would have made it through. My children, Matt and Jenny, for your patience with me during the holidays and birthdays researching and typing in the other room. Your encouragement and support made this possible. Thank you to Phyllis Balcerzak for your inspiration, advice and critiques throughout the journey. They saved me from many timely errors. Joan and Liz for your words of encouragement when I got discouraged and was ready to quit. The bottle of Chardonnay and the pep talks at Rannoush’s kept me going through the struggles of job and dissertation. Also, a huge thanks to the eighth-grade team and staff at Berkeley Middle School for your encouragement and support during this process and the student council for your awesome work. Thank you for taking on one more thing in this year of change.

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JANCARLOS (J.C.) ROMERO

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On the afternoon of February 14, 2018, a 19-year old, former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida entered a campus building armed with an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle and several magazines of ammunition. He activated a fire alarm and when students and teachers proceeded to follow the rehearsed evacuation plan, the gunman shot indiscriminately, killing 17 people. At the time of this research study, this shooting marked the tenth school shooting in which four or more people were killed since the students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School were born. Since 1999, 362 students in the United States of America have been killed at school -- an average of 19 students per year with 55 of those being in 2018 (Lopez, 2018). In the days following the shooting, a group of surviving students led a movement known as “Enough.” The movement sparked marches, walkouts and other forms of protest, as well as calls for legislation directed to the U.S. Congress to pass comprehensive gun reform laws (Prothero & Andrew, 2018). Young people have a lot at stake in the future, but their voices are often missing from local and national conversations. Adults, who are in charge, enact policies while the lived experiences of youth are not always considered. This research drew guidance from prior studies to explore how adults could employ leadership strategies to encourage youth to access their voice, engage with adults in their communities, and feel empowered to act on their ideas in order to inspire change in their communities.

The youth from Parkland, Florida are an example of how young people could be a powerful ally to democracy. In response to the student led marches that began in
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Parkland, other young people, joined by adults in communities across the country, offered support through peaceful protest. It was estimated that “hundreds of thousands” demonstrated at the capitol in Washington D.C. (Jamison, Heim, Aratani, & Lang, 2018). The efforts of students and parents to lobby the state legislature caused the state of Florida to pass unprecedented legislation including adopting age restrictions, implementing a waiting period for the purchase of guns, and allowing schools to arm some employees on campus (Phillips, 2018). In addition, retailers began to restrict the sale of popular weapons and ammunition, choosing youth safety over profits in an unprecedented move (Creswell & Corkery, 2018). The youth who took a stand after this shooting made real change by stepping into the spotlight on a divisive national issue, and by gaining support from adults. They influenced legislation, changed the face of retail, and showed the world the power that youth can have to effect change.

Democracy relies on the engagement of its citizens; cultivating youth voices and fostering youth engagement is vital to a sustainable participatory culture (Boyte, 2013; Burke, Greene, & McKenna, 2017). Integrating youth viewpoints into community planning and encouraging young people to take on leadership roles creates a positive cycle of civic engagement (Boyte, 2013; Burke, Greene, & McKenna, 2017; DuBois & Keller, 2017). Prior research pointed to active engagement as an indication of healthy communities. The research illuminated strategies such as building community partnerships (DuBois & Keller, 2017; Ritchhart, 2015; Tonge, Mycock, & Jeffery, 2012), working with youth through problem-based learning (Boyte, 2013; Lokey-Vega & Bonderson, 2017; Ritchhart, 2015), building mentoring programs (Dubois & Keller, 2017), inviting families to participate alongside youth (Constantino, 2016; Witte &
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Sheridan, 2011), citizenship education (Boyte, 2013; Lukensmeyer, 2012), and trust building (Putnam, 2015). These strategies worked by engaging youth in critical thinking and active participation in community heritage or social justice needs (Constantino, 2016; Elbein, 2017; Prothero & Andrew, 2018). For the purpose of this action research study, community heritage refers to place, identity, and the history of a community, while social justice refers to action to correct an inequity of some kind.

To date, the research that explores the impact of participatory youth involves students learning to engage in local needs related to infrastructure planning, but there is limited research that identifies an effective model for trained mentors to use in helping students engage a civic, community heritage, or social justice need. This research study drew upon previously successful strategies to develop a methodology to train youth and their mentors for authentic engagement in community heritage, social justice, and civic needs. Using proven strategies, outlined in this study, the researchers developed and implemented a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM). YPEM follows five stages of action research (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982) to recognize and cultivate youth voices, engage youth and mentors in effective strategies to address their group-identified heritage or social justice need, and give each group tools and support to share their ideas with those in their local community who hold the power to take action. The research team developed YPEM informed by the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996), or “SCM”. The SCM identified three levels of engagement: individual, group, and society. Each level connects to six core values that provide purpose and lead to change (HERI, 1996). The values define the eight key traits of effective leaders. Specific
strategies, like those previously mentioned, emerged through the development of partnerships, and designing and implementing an action plan. The researchers in this study adopted a transformative worldview philosophy (Mertens, 2010). This philosophy interlaces politics and a political change agenda by studying the phenomenon through action research and problem-centered change (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2010).

In this qualitative action research study, young people and their mentors worked alongside researchers to identify and advocate for a local heritage or social justice need. Researchers actively worked through YPEM to engage with six separate youth groups that included urban, suburban, rural, and tribal areas embedded in varied cultural and socioeconomic contexts. Researchers relied upon the groups to help ensure that the researcher engaged the members in culturally competent ways. This included asking groups to define values and preferences. The groups that participated in the included traditionally underrepresented youth. The diverse representation allowed for the emergence of rich information that can inform future studies in cultural competence.

BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Civic engagement is the cornerstone of a healthy democracy, yet active civic participation in the United States of America continues to decline (Palmer, 2011; Putnam, 2000; Zemelman, 2016). Researchers have noted the effects of disengagement in communities across the country that challenge the symbiotic relationship between communities and citizens (Brown & Fischer, 2017; Burdick-Will, Ludwig, Raudenbush, Sampson, Sanbonmatsu, & Sharkey, 2011; Desmond, 2016; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016; Kershaw, Albrecht, & Carnethon, 2013; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Lowenhaupt,
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Public lands and schools, democratic processes, and community infrastructures are at risk when “we the people” fail to participate in the preservation of our culture and heritage (Palmer, 2011; Trudel & Metiou, 2015). Social justice remains at the forefront of America’s struggle. As we grapple with the difficult racial history and policies of the nation, (Alexander, 2010; Anderson, 2016; Bashir, 2012; Coates, 2014; Jaspin, 2007; Johnstone & Quirk, 2012; Rosenblatt & DeLuca, 2017; Thompson, 2016) and the financially crippling practices that have widened the income gap between the “haves” and “have nots.” (Putnam, 2000, 2015; Sachs, 2011; Stiglitz, 2012) we learn how these problems affect the health of communities. The problem require sustained generational input, so equipping youth to participate is a valuable part of the process.

In recent times, the government and its people have become distant (Palmer, 2011; Putnam, 2000). This collapse has caused a slow disengagement that affects communities in various ways. This is especially significant for local communities where the disconnection between self and society is most relevant and influential. In these communities, there is a significant breakdown in the symbiotic relationship between communities and its citizens (Brown & Fischer, 2017; Young, 2006). The most affected groups are located in rural districts, on Native American reservations, and in poverty-stricken communities with underprivileged access to basic needs for survival, such as water, electricity, technology, and transportation (Costa & Kahn, 2003; Oliver, 1999; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). Through deculturalization, indigenous groups find themselves bound to live two lives in order to both survive in mainstream America and to preserve
what is left of their Native American language and culture. Spring asserts that, “as a result of globalization and imperialism, indigenous peoples are forced to undergo extreme cultural change, resulting in many becoming socially and psychologically dysfunctional” (2016, p. 22). The consequences of disengagement include poverty, isolation, increased crime, and economic deserts (Boggs, 2001; Caputo, 2010). Evidence of this phenomenon appears in communities across America. “The greater our tendency toward individualism, the weaker our communal fabric; the weaker our communal fabric, the more vulnerable we are to despotic power” (Palmer, 2011, p. 42). In these communities, social inequality, poverty, racial and ethnic underrepresentation, and systemic bias inhibit upward mobility (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Brown & Fischer, 2017; Desmond, 2016; Rosenblatt & DeLuca, 2017; Stiglitz, America’s 1% Problem, 2012; Thompson, 2016; Vance, 2016).

The impacts for community members include: increased rates of applications for government assistance (Oreopoulos, 2003), declining physical and mental health (Brown & Fischer, 2017; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), high rates of unemployment, lack of economic growth, and stagnant low-wages (Brown & Fischer, 2017; Ludwig et al., 2012), increased rates of teen pregnancy and single parenting (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), violent crime (Burdick-Will et al., 2011), increased likelihood of cyclical incarceration (Alexander, 2010; Damm & Dustmann, 2014), drug abuse (Brown & Fischer, 2017), lack of access to higher education (Brown & Fischer, 2017), deculturalization (Young, 2006), lower academic achievement (Lacour & Tissington, 2011), fewer community resources (Goldring, Cohen-Vogel, Smrekar, & Taylor, 2006), and chronic obesity (Kershaw, Albrecht, & Carnethon, 2013).
The consequences of apathy in citizenry can exacerbate community disconnect if it is not addressed. To address the problem, communities need adults who can lead with confidence in their respective communities. This research developed a protocol for YPEM for fostering youth voices and engaging them with adult mentors and community resources. The end goal of YPEM was to lead youth and their mentors through a process that empowered them to act as justice-oriented citizens who could not only work toward improving community resources, but also cultivate a more “critical stance on social, political, and economic issues” (Flanagan & Watts, 2007, p.782). Mentors are vital to guide youth through the process of identifying their voice, engaging in community, and becoming empowered to advocate for their ideas in relation to those who have the power to act. This participation is essential in the process of cyclical community involvement (DuBois & Keller, 2017; Pritzker & Metzger, 2011; Tonge, Mycock, & Jeffery, 2012).

As active citizens, adults share responsibility in developing youth to take on these challenges, and this is where we as adults are falling short (Covey, 2008; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000).

The researchers involved in this study are passionate about community heritage and social justice issues, which influenced their perception of the interactions with the participants. The researchers were cognizant of potential for bias in action research. They minimized bias by establishing guidelines for triangulation and an external audit of the study. With the bias control guidelines in place, researchers opted for the action research in order to gain qualitative insight through observation of and interviews with youth from diverse backgrounds. The participant in this research study are not often included in research studies.
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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a community heritage or social justice need.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on research regarding youth empowerment the following questions emerged:

Central question:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect youth and adult perceptions of the ability of youth to influence a) a community heritage, or b) social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. Does implementing YPEM affect the ability of youth and adult mentors to cultivate youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment as it relates to a community heritage or social justice issue?

2. Which aspects of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

This study used qualitative data to explore how each stage of YPEM affects the active participation of youth and their mentors in their communities. Researchers explored the impact of each stage of the model through interview data and observational field notes.
THEORY OF CHANGE

This Theory of Change is grounded in the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM) (HERI, 1996). The SCM is based upon the following premises (Bonous-Hammarth, 1996; HERI, 1996; Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2017):

1. Leadership is socially responsible; it affects change on behalf of others.
2. Leadership is collaborative.
3. Leadership is a process, not a position.
4. Leadership is inclusive and accessible to all people.
5. Leadership is value-based.
6. Community involvement and service is a powerful vehicle for leadership.

A key component of the model holds that leadership is a process (HERI, 1996).

The emphasis on relationships in the SCM highlights the importance of the term process, which describes the way in which change (and ultimately leadership) occurs (HERI, 1996). According to HERI and colleagues (as cited in Komives, et al., 2017, p. 19):

The model is rooted in a commitment to core human values, such as self-knowledge, service, and collaboration. Although some approaches to leadership focus on the lead or position of leadership, the SCM is grounded in the postindustrial paradigm and assumes that leadership describes people’s collaborative process, not a position.

To develop YPEM, researchers followed the basic framework of SCM. The framework is embedded with collaboration, and is concerned with fostering positive social change from the perspective of the individual, the group, and the community (HERI, 1996). To effect changes needed to address the central phenomenon of this study, researchers used their observations and interviews to develop a model that cultivates a specific skill set designed to assist youth in actively addressing social justice and heritage needs within their own communities.

The original SCM relied on seven core values (HERI, 1996). Definitions of Core-Values of the SCM (HERI, 1996), upon which YPEM was built, were used to code the
interviews and field notes and then analyzed for patterns or changes. The core values include consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship. The last one which was also included was change. Change is considered the value “hub” which gives meaning and purpose to the 7 C’s. Change in other words, is the ultimate goal of the creative process of leadership - to make a better world and a better society for self and others (HERI, 1996). This was why change was included in YPEM.

The implications of the study are significant in that it explored YPEM in the context of practice with youth and youth mentors from varied geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic circumstances. From these interviews and observations, and through a method of participatory action research, researchers implemented an action model and determined in what ways, to what extent, and under what circumstances (Patton, 2008) the action model achieved the desired program outcomes to increase youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment.

Figure 1. Theory of Youth Voice-Engagement-Empowerment Model
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

OVERVIEW

Our research originated with an observation that there is disconnection between government and the people it serves. Existing research revealed a rise in the distrust of government, lack of engagement with local entities, and feelings of helplessness among citizens and their local officials. Further, we explored the connection between youth and local officials, and how youth can add perspective and influence change within government. In addition, we explored research studies that highlighted the positive and negative impact that citizen engagement has on community health, economics, wellness, upward mobility, and education. This research study also explored several barriers to meaningful community engagement. These barriers include low levels of cultural competence, lack of buy-in from both adult and youth citizens, lack of leadership, and fractured relationships between formal and informal education opportunities for youth. We also identified the consequences of lack of citizen engagement, which include the absence of authentic human voices, the growing prevalence of poor interpersonal skills, and the effects of short-term solutions to long-term social and community-based problems. More specifically, we identified negative consequences of acculturation and deculturalization of humans and their heritage in American society, decreased access to affordable healthcare, and limited upward mobility and poor formal educational opportunities. After identifying barriers, consequences, and youth perspectives, the research examined characteristics of communities that have a healthy citizen-government relationship. We identified strategies used in these communities and developed a model to assist youth in accessing their voice and engaging with partners in order to effect change in their communities.
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CURRENT TRENDS IN YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL OFFICIALS

Two major works influenced our deeper examination of the barriers that often deter citizen engagement and the consequences of disengagement: Robert Putnam’s work *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, and Parker Palmer’s work *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit*. From these works, two major themes emerged: (1) American citizens are disconnected from civic life, and (2) disconnected citizenship has resulted in collective pain. Since the turn of the twentieth century, trends in engagement in public life have steadily declined (Putnam, 2000). This is not only true for political life, but it is also true for engagement in local clubs and organizations; from bridge club to PTA, membership numbers are down (Putnam, 2000). This lack of participation comes despite the fact that there are more organizations than any other time in American history. Putnam also noted that there is more call for people to send money, pay dues, write checks, and less call for people to come to meetings and participate in discussion (p. 49). The declining participatory culture reveals itself with consequences that range from increased isolation, depression, and anxiety, to a threat to democracy by authoritarian means.

In *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam draws on vast quantitative data from multiple sources that illuminates trends in engagement politically, socially, and organizationally. He looks at data from the 20th century -- with the most focus on the second half of the century, publishing his first edition in 2000. At that point, he investigated and placed heavy emphasis on the changes in the family, the pressure that people face with respect to time and money, and how economic policies seemed to make it increasingly difficult for families to make ends
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meet. He noticed a rising trend in mobility and how we tend to sprawl more -- moving and having less access to extended family and lifelong friends. He noted that technology and mass media influence how we spend our time and how we think about others (Putnam, 2000). Further, Putnam asserted that Americans really began cocooning in the 1970s. His substantial body of evidence points to how this trend has led to a lessening of social capital and reveals the consequences of disconnected relationships - which we explored in depth through our literature review.

Parker Palmer took a similar approach in his research, which is reported in the book *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit*. Palmer picks up where Putnam left off. Published in 2011, Palmer expands on the causes and consequences of the trend toward citizen disengagement by examining the impacts through the first decade of the 21st Century, especially as viewed through a post 9/11 lens. Palmer reveals how fear and lack of trust in each other factor into our disengagement (Palmer, 2011). He cautions that fear is often the precursor for political power taking a different turn -- from democracy to authoritarian government, for instance. This fear and mistrust affect us on more personal levels as it often manifests in more violence, higher crime rates, increased depression and anxiety, and divisive politics that create a “me” versus “you” environment (Palmer, 2011). Palmer echoes Putnam’s characterization of cocooning by saying, “The greater our tendency toward individualism, the weaker our communal fabric; the weaker our communal fabric, the more vulnerable we are to despotic power” (Palmer, 2011, p. 42).

Recent research illuminates the lack of participation of teens and young adults in local civic, social, and heritage organizations by identifying which groups participate the
least and why. Snell (2010) completed a mixed methods study combining phone surveys, interviews, and focus groups where she looked at teens and young adults ages 13-24 to determine why they were not participating in local or global politics. Only 4% of the participants identified as “Political” while 69% considered themselves “Apathetic,” “Uninformed,” “Distrustful,” or “Disempowered.” Her research found that participants who considered themselves involved in politics really meant that they watched television about politics and read articles about politics but were not truly involved in local government. Participants who indicated that they were apolitical cited lack of trust and disempowerment, believing that they could do little to influence politics. The study found that young people who were not involved in local politics identified as materialistic and distrustful while youth who were involved were found to be anti-consumerists.

These same issues were found in other focus groups and interviews conducted with similar age ranges. Youth stated that they did not trust political and formal institutions and showed no interest in the necessity of politics. They cited racist practices, discrimination, unaddressed violence in their neighborhoods, and no fair or due process as just a few reasons for the growing distrust between authority figures and young adult cohorts, especially in minority groups. Youth stated that politics are corrupted by money and organizations and have only their own interests at heart. They also identified civic responsibilities with negative connotations and did not see a connection between civic responsibilities and community. Young adults also considered themselves somewhat political if they watched the news or occasionally watched politics on TV, indicating a vast disconnect between actual engagement and knowledge (Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, & Zukin, 2002; Rubin, 2007; Snell, 2010).
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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN COMMUNITIES DISENGAGE?

Struggling communities share common symptoms, but how this correlate to citizen disengagement is unclear in the research. One possibility is that citizens withdrew from public life after deciding that engagement did not improve circumstances for their community. It is also possible, that the community struggles began because its citizens withdrew. Whether the apathy caused communities to struggle or the struggling communities led to apathy, citizen disengagement is a common factor in the fractured community. Across communities--rural, suburban, and urban, Latino, and tribal--lack of engagement perpetuates poverty and stagnation. Several research studies reported that communities with high rates of poverty often have citizens who are disconnected (Brown & Fischer, 2017; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). People who live in poverty often have limited educational opportunities, less access to health care, higher rates of incarceration, higher rates of obesity, fewer employment opportunities, fewer resources, higher drug use, higher crime rates, and higher mortality rates (Damm & Dustmann, 2014; Goldring, et al., 2006; Kershaw, Albrecht, & Carnethon, 2013; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Ludwig et al, 2012; Oreopoulos, 2003). Likewise, these communities also demonstrate a general apathy for local government (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). This cycle creates indifference; the notion that civic engagement is a figment rather than an opportunity (Goldring, et al., 2006; Hebblethwaite et al., 2006; Lacour & Tissington, 2011).

Environmental health proved a huge factor in our research of the consequences of disengaged communities. The reality is that communities of color and low-income neighborhoods are disproportionately burdened with a range of environmental hazards,
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including polluting industries, landfills, incinerators, and illegal dumps. Researchers have supported this conclusion with analyses of census data and case studies of contaminated communities where poor people and people of color are the residential majority (Pellow, 2004). Numerous studies of the intersection between ecological hazards and social inequality and concluded that environmental inequality and environmental racism are prevalent in communities across the United States (Krieg 1998; Mohai 1996; Pastor, Sadd & Hipp 2001, Pellow, 2004). This racial inequality black neighborhoods increases youth contact with hazardous environmental features including violence and toxic exposures that contribute to racial inequality in youth health and well-being (Teixeira & Zuberi, 2016).

Environmental fracture of communities is prevalent in Native American communities, and there is a real need to reconnect these communities to their natural environment. Sam Slater, a member of the Navajo Nation commented on the phenomenon.

We are committed to deepening our connections with our cultures as they relate to climate change and the impacts on community and environmental health, because we know too well that what is done to the land is done to the people, and right now both are threatened (Center for Native American Youth, State of Native Youth Report, 2016).

The report discussed the Inter-Tribal Youth Climate Leadership Congress, which convenes over 100 Native youth each year, to raise environmental awareness in tribal communities. The goal of the congress was to teach youth to reduce their carbon footprints through recycling, composting, and renewable energy initiatives. It is critical to strengthen youth-led efforts to protect natural resources through Traditional Ecological
Reconnection to the environment will help to combat common stereotypes of disenfranchised communities. Persistent negative stereotypes that depict African Americans as physically and spiritually detached from the environment have caused many in the community to believe it themselves (Galves, 2010). In the years after enslavement, African Americans began to move to northern cities in mass migration that continued into the 1970s. Relocations often increased the distance from the family experiences of fields, gardens, and woods. Increased fear of nature became the emotional legacy of kidnapped and enslaved people who were forced to pick cotton and prime tobacco for often violent and abusive masters (Glaves, 2010). The legacy of these experiences also hardened members of a community into another stereotype: apathetic environmentalist or anti-environmentalist (Glaves, 2010). This distance from the natural environment is evident from the number of minorities within natural resources fields (Carr, et al., 2017).

A key components of persistence in sciences for Native American students is the melding of science and culture (traditional knowledge, lived experience, and values) in their curriculum (Akee & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011). Despite increasing numbers of minorities in natural resource fields, Native Americans represent only about 1% of the student population in the United States natural resource programs (Sharik, Lilieholm, Lindquist, & Richardson, 2015). A recent report by Sharik et al. (2015) highlighted the challenges that native students face. This includes the distance from tribal lands and the low diversity of faculty at four-year natural resource institutions. This included the
Native Americans’ long history of respecting the land, their need to manage land holdings related to their sovereign rights, and the encouragement from elders to contribute positively to their pursuit of natural resource education (Carr, et al., 2017).

Learning environments, including organizations, are also critical for youth. Organizations like Apache Stronghold, Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, and Earth Guardians are inspiring action on environmental issues, and creating platforms for young Native American leaders to advocate for protecting land and sacred sites from oil drilling, hydraulic fracking, contaminating drinking water, and other harmful effects of development (Center for American Youth, State of Native Youth, 2016). Further evidence reveals how school environment and access to physical activities are critical to the health of Native American youth (Teufel-Shone, Siyuja, Watahomigie & Irwin, 2006). This study also provided an overview of local factors that motivate youth to engage in healthy versus unhealthy behaviors. Healthy behavior can come from a community gym, community playgrounds, school activities/sports, sports tournaments (intra community and intertribal), community events (Indian Days, La Paz Run, Sobriety Festival, etc.), churches, summer camps, rope challenge courses, and ball fields for sports. Unhealthy behavior can come from lack of healthy choices at the local store, lack of parental involvement, lack of volunteerism, inconsistent youth programs, and visible substance abuse (Teufel-Shone et al., 2006).

Communities often turn to the school system to aid in engagement, but poor school districts struggle to compete with high functioning districts, in part, because it is difficult to attract and retain quality educators. These struggling communities are not appealing to outsiders as a place to move, and pay scales cannot compete with larger,
more affluent districts (Goldring, et al., 2006). This leaves districts with few options other than to hire inexperienced teachers, who can accept lower pay and fewer benefits. It is typical for these teachers to move on to better opportunities as they gain experience (Bauch, 2001). Schools in communities with high rates of poverty often have limited basic resources. Parents who live in these neighborhood struggle to keep up with the educational experience of their children because of work and other demands (Admire-Duncan, 2015; Brown, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Goldring, et al., 2006; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Ngo, 2012). In addition, these districts have lower performance on achievement tests (Burdick-Will et al, 2011; Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Students who graduate from underperforming districts have fewer post-secondary education opportunities and are less likely to graduate (Brown & Fischer, 2017; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Ludwig et al, 2012). Minority status stress, which is the stress that African American college students experience at predominantly Caucasian institutions, has also been found to negatively affect students’ persistence in college (Brown, 2012).

WHAT SOCIAL, CULTURAL, SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO YOUTH AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT EXIST?

Social, cultural, and systemic inequities create barriers to accessing the resources, skills, and contacts necessary to become successful, productive members of society. These barriers often shut out access to resources like parks, economic opportunities, healthcare, and education that are more readily available for upwardly mobile communities.

One barrier to engagement is lack of knowledge or awareness of skills and opportunities to engage. Youth who come from lower income and minority
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neighborhoods often attend unaccredited or probationary elementary and secondary schools, which inhibits sustained civic involvement at an influential level. This inequity negatively affects their access to community connections, appropriate interpersonal skills for engaging with others, and resources necessary to empower youth. It is a systematic breakdown of the community unit and its genesis begins with poverty, transient lifestyles, single parenting, and lack of diversity. The outcome is an inability to organize a community with an effective output. These barriers are seen throughout minority communities living in poverty throughout the United States regardless of physical community location. The effects are felt in rural, urban, suburban, immigrant, and tribal areas. Varying and unique methods for alleviating these burdens prove effective in each place. Cultural competence means recognizing and respecting the culture of each community. Without a sense of cultural competence, those trying to help use a one size fits all approach to solving the problems in each environment. This approach is ineffective and represents an ignorance regarding the ways in which these cultures function (Brown, 2007; Brown & Fischer, 2017; Hebblethwaite et al, 2006; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000).

In a country that continues to grow in diversity and cultural competence, the authentic awareness of diversity is crucial to cultivating thriving communities. Yet this awareness continues to be a significant growth area for many societies. Published studies highlight the importance of cultural competence and diversity as a tool that can challenge the barriers to access that exist for our most vulnerable communities. Lack of cultural competence affects a variety of groups across service fields. In healthcare, lack of cultural competence affects access to good healthcare leading to higher rates of mortality,
drug abuse, and mental and physical health issues. In education, implicit bias, lack of proactive change, and lack of teacher training result in lower self-esteem, lower academic success, and increased behavioral issues. Teachers in low-income areas typically have fewer years of experience, are less reflective, and do not mirror the communities in which they teach (Bauch, 2001; Brown, 2007; Hebblewaithe, 2006).

Nestled within the notion of cultural competence, is the need for family engagement and language barriers. When community establishments do not have leadership that reflects their current demographic, they feel unrepresented. Language barriers perpetuate that divide. In these cases, citizens cannot communicate their needs and wants effectively to leadership. When youth exhibit a language barrier, the results are a division between the students who can communicate and those who cannot. If teachers and other leaders cannot support their communication, they cannot support them educationally. This coincides with diversity in public leadership as well. Lack of diversity in leadership roles can cause youth and citizens to turn away out of fear of acculturation. People want to be led by people who look like them, talk like them, and know their struggles regarding conforming to a “western philosophy” that disenfranchises non-Anglo Saxon populations (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Berry, Phinney, San, & Vedder, 2006; Chu, Rasmussen, Akinsukure-Smith & Keatley, 2015; Good, Masewicz & Vogel, 2010; Taylor, 2007).

Another barrier to engagement is the lack of leadership opportunities for citizens. The research reviewed for this study revealed that in communities without strong leadership, citizens were less likely to be active in decision-making, problem solving, and policy discussions. Lack of clear mission and goals, lack of funding, lack of time, and
lack of space were cited as a barrier to improvement in these communities (Sanders & Lewis, 2005; Sanders & Simon, 2002). Outside of internal issues, other barriers emerged. Barriers like few community resources like businesses, advocates, churches, and financial support, lack of community connections and partnerships, lack of physical meeting space, and lack of parental involvement in youth activities and education (Sanders & Simon, 2002; Sanders & Lewis, 2005).

One of the last barriers the research explored was the lack of youth support; these included lack of confidence in youth, lack of leadership, and lack of opportunity. Having a negative mindset regarding youth abilities and influence emerged as a major barrier for empowering youth across all settings; it cripples partnerships and local leadership. The perception of adults, that youth are a burden and not an asset to society influences the minds of young people, giving them the idea that they are not important or that their input and knowledge are not worthwhile. This adult lens gives youth the impression that they are not trusted within civic circles and that their age difference is a hindrance to authentically connecting with adults in the community. Finally, when adults disenfranchise youth by not addressing their requests with urgency, minimizing their voice, and not allowing them to have a stake in the community, they become complacent and apathetic (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Checkoway, 2015; Flanagan & Watts, 2007; Joselowsky, 2007; Tuxill, Mitchell, & Clark, 2009; Wholey & Burkes, 2015). Nobel peace prize recipient Kofi Annan said it best.

Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies (Annan, 2014).
These social, cultural, and systemic inequities can be seen through the barrier of trauma. The horrors and hardships passed from generation to generation through oral tradition, creating residual anxiety long after their ancestors had completed their arduous journeys. This oral tradition is referred to as the “Middle Passage”. This barrier of trauma from the Middle Passage can help explain phenomena like the fear of open water that was prevalent among contemporary African Americans; it echoes psychological terror and torture at the hands of whites (Glaves, 2010). There are also traumatic memories of whites taking land away from free African Americans through taxation and the withholding of government loans (Glaves, 2010). During the 1950s and into 1960s the Ku Klux Klan renewed itself as a powerful terrorist organization through actions such as castrations, lynchings, killings, and the bombing of black homes and churches. Several civil rights leaders, activists, and progressive clergy launched boycotts, marches, and sit-ins to protest the Jim Crow system. They were greeted with fire hoses, police dogs, bombings, and beatings by white mobs, as well as by the police (Alexander, 2010). The trauma that was experienced by African Americans transcends generations. The stress that black people encounter on a daily basis because of their minority status and its effects on their physical health and psychological well-being has been researched and documented (Brown, 2012).

Unfortunately, the impact of enduring intergenerational trauma affects other communities as well. Native youth today often live in communities that are disproportionately affected by high rates of poverty, unemployment, health disparities, substance abuse, low educational attainment, family violence, and crime that includes elevated youth gang activity. Such significant negatives are influenced by
intergenerational trauma resulting from genocide, forced relocation, the boarding school system, and other devastating policies (Center for Native American Youth, State of Native Youth, 2016). Red Power can be traced back to the student activism of the National Youth Council (NIYC) (Shreve, 2011). This includes accounts of harassment of NIYC chapter’s members. In Brigham City, Utah, student affiliates reported being harassed on a daily basis by the city’s police department and residents. The situation stemmed from Diné student complaints of Intermountain’s draconian regulations, which limited free speech, forced Mormon conversion, and authorized excessive disciplinary action. Students told NIYC staffer that schools officials had handcuffed them, shaved their heads, injected them with the tranquilizer Thorazine for breaking Intermountain’s strict rules (Shreve, 2011).

This history helps explain the difficulty in convincing young people to use their voice to effect change. It also illuminates the competing tension between the importance of helping youth access their voice, engage in community activism, and feel empowered to make change. In the recent political climate, Americans are beginning to see youth speaking out and taking initiative to help their communities and families heal from these intergenerational traumas, build resilience, and advocate for strengthening the protections of critical laws like the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) that emphasize cultural connectedness and family placement. This is a positive change. Native youth are starting programs and initiatives and supporting other advocates in their communities to turn the tide on intergenerational trauma and poor health (Center for Native American Youth, State of Native Youth, 2016).
WHAT INCREASES YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THESE COMMUNITIES?

After reviewing the numerous barriers to youth engagement in communities and the state of youth perspectives on government entities, it may seem daunting to attempt to empower youth to take a stake in their community. Research for empowering youth was sparse, but what did emerge gave a clear message about what strategies are most beneficial for increasing youth participation. This information can be broken down into physical traits (such as buildings, people, and place), psychological traits (mindsets and perspectives) and community traits.

Physical Traits (Actions)

Long before youth can change the world, they need space to do that. A physical space is an important condition to support youth empowerment. Space indicates a home, a trust, a literal place where youth can be safe to create, endure, and explore. Space needs to be accessible, clean, safe, nearby, and without restriction. Space needs to convey a message of respect, honor of culture, and a sacredness of ownership (Joselowsky, 2007; Ramasubramanian & Gonzalez, 2007, Tuxill, et al., 2009; Salazar, Martinez, & Ortego, 2016).

Outside of space, another important component is funding. Youth need enough investment to be able to complete tasks and make actual change. Without community investment behind their ideas, the initiatives will fall flat, leaving them even more discouraged. In addition, leadership needs to make youth a priority (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Time with youth must be sacred and non-negotiable and adult mentors need to
show others that this is important. When other priorities become apparent, the mentors must push back and stand firm (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Sanders & Lewis, 2005).

The final physical component is to involve the youth in the actual process of research. Participatory Action Research (PAR) requires just that: participation. The core of youth involvement and engagement is to have them be part of the process of change. Studying change, analyzing change, and pulling data to create change allows the participants to become invested in the information and the process. PAR builds on partnerships, relationships, and trust among participants. It also encourages investment for youth and mentors (Dolan, Christen & Lin, 2015; Iwasaki, Springett, Dashonra, McLaughlin & McHugh, 2014). Following the organizational properties of PAR encourages youth to create goals, identify mission and vision, and work collaboratively within local partnerships. The process further guides participants to make action plans, set deadlines, and reflect frequently to analyze progress. The process sets participants up for success and investment (Dolan, et al., 2015; Herr & Anderson, 2014). The fundamentals of PAR empower youth by allowing for their creative influence to shine and for the process to be entirely collaborative (Ramasubramanian & Gonzalez, 2007).

Psychological Traits (Exploration and Growth)

When considering the psychology of working with youth, successful groups look at youth as an important member of their society. They consider their input not only important, but also vital to the functioning of the community at large. Across physical locations (rural, urban, suburban, immigrant, tribal) the partnerships that function best were those that acknowledged the importance of youth voice and displayed that through
their actions and interactions with youth. Drawing upon their expertise and knowledge empowers them and builds trust within the partnerships. Once trust is established, youth voice is cultivated and their ability to lead emerges naturally (Checkoway, 2015; Wholey & Burkes, 2015).

Another important factor for empowering youth is to have cultural competence within leadership and participants. Considering language barriers, cultural differences, communication styles, and differences among classes makes participants feel that they are respected and that their heritage is honored. Pointing out differences makes them noticeable and can lead to confusion and embarrassment but embedding culture into everyday interactions and common practice can make participants feel valued and supported. This leads to more productive interactions and engagements that are more authentic. These types of interactions build participant confidence and grow their knowledge and investment in their own heritage and culture. In turn, youth will support their culture in their interactions with others and in leadership positions. The psychological power of having individualism honored and cherished is returned tenfold when empowering youth (Admire-Duncan, 2015; Akee & Yazzie-Mintz, 201; Le, Polonsky, & Arambewela, 2014; Ngo, 2012).

The final psychological ability of a high functioning youth empowerment group is positive all-inclusive mindset; one that acknowledges cultural youth worth, sees the value in youth input, and explores the depths and reach that youth have in a community provides a catalyst for youth empowerment (Salazar, et al., 2016). Negative stereotypes and lack of faith in the power of youth further divides citizens making it difficult to make real progress with either group. Division and lack of support for youth essentially kills
partnerships (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Flanagan & Watts, 2007). With mindful psychological observation comes the ability to be reflective. This allows growth to emerge through the process of learning. The space and encouragement to reflect on what experiences youth have had allows them to increase their skill set and improve in their abilities to lead.

Community Traits (Partnerships)

Partnerships are essential to youth empowerment success. Formal partnerships like cohesive relationships between civic, local, and environmental groups, and informal partnerships like connection between fellow citizens and local businesses are essential. Partnerships breed symbiotic relationships that require both sides to maintain a state of balance. When one partnership is heavy on either side, it disrupts the balance causing one side’s growth to feel diminished. Equal balanced partnerships that lift youth up and facilitate goal achievement are always prevalent in successful youth empowerment groups (Iwasaki, et al., 2014; Sanders & Lewis, 2005; Sanders & Simon, 2002).

Formal partnerships for youth are partnerships that put youth in positions of power. Leadership positions like representatives on formal committees, boards, and in other formal operations, support youth voice and facilitate youth input into civic and heritage opportunities. Opportunities may include being part of legislation, weighing in on youth programming, giving a voice to youth-led endeavors, being part of a community solution to issues, and providing a youth perspective on social issues. Integrating youth into such partnerships allows for symbiotic collaborations between members of society.
that benefit a common goal (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006; Sanders & Lewis, 2005).

Informal partnerships, on the other hand, provide the infrastructural support that the groups need to operate. Partnerships with local entities to provide space, nourishment, utilities, and safety are just as important as formal partnerships. Also, adults provide support through facilitation and mentoring of youth to support their ideas and actions within the community. Adult community members provide guidance and knowledge for creating action plans and developing goals. Informal partnerships open doors with government officials and public spaces. They introduce youth to larger pools of people and resources, which help support youth’s vision. The combination of formal and informal partnerships is essential to the success of youth (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Jennings, et al., 2006; Joselowsky, 2007; Sanders & Lewis, 2005).

Mentors are an integral partnership for youth. Mentors are responsible for providing guidance, knowledge, partnerships, skills, and scaffolding levels of support to help youth sustain themselves in their own role. A good mentor is culturally competent, fluent in rules and regulations regarding youth focus areas, well connected in the community, and respected by youth. Mentors understand the importance of youth voice and work to cultivate it. They take the back seat and let youth drive. Good mentors are selfless and let the light shine on the youth while taking none of the credit. They understand that the bigger picture of youth empowerment is the impact that it has on the future of the community and not the current acknowledgement of contribution. Good mentors work invisibly in the background, but their impact is impossible to ignore (Brown & Fischer, 2017; Salazar, et al., 2016; Tuxill, et al., 2009).
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YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EMPOWERMENT MODEL PROTOTYPE

Through the culminating research presented, the research team developed a model to support mentors and youth in their quest to address social justice, civic, and heritage issues within their community. The prototype Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) was setup in five stages. The stages started from forming a group to collaborating to identify and engage a community heritage or social justice issue. Within the model, the five stages were divided into three subsections: Partnerships, Exploration and Growth, and Actions. Partnerships focused on building trust, supporting mentors, and forming relationships and partnerships within the community. Exploration and Growth focused on identifying needs within the community and strategies for implementing change. Actions explored building citizenship and devising action plans for facilitating the change chosen in the first stage. The seven C’s of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development were embedded into the model to demonstrate growth and empowerment of the participants’ leadership skills. From this model, researchers developed a sequence of activities to aid youth and mentors through the process of empowerment. The activities allow for age variance to increase engagement. The guidebook offers suggest strategies as well as observational logs to support mentor work with youth.
Figure 2. Prototype Youth Participatory Empowerment Model
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

OVERVIEW

This study used qualitative methods to examine the relationships between youth voice, youth engagement and youth empowerment resulting from the implementation of YPEM. Included in these methods were Participatory Action Research, Ethnography, and Grounded Theory methodologies. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as follows:

...a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involved emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants’ setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (p. 246)

Qualitative research produces findings that are not always measurable by statistical evidence. It involves information about people’s lives, interactions, social movements, cultural phenomena, and emotions collected via interviews, observation, and other immersion techniques within a specific population.

For the purpose of this research, the team adopted a transformative worldview to guide the exploration and emergence of data. Transformative worldviews focus on the cohesive relationship between research and politics with the goal of changing policy or the political landscape. This worldview focuses on confronting social oppression and developing action items to reform these issues (Creswell, 2014). A transformative paradigm is “a framework that directly engages members of culturally diverse groups with a focus on increasing social justice” (Mertens, 2010). Our worldview seeks to acknowledge and encourage youth voice, to enhance youth engagement, and to promote social change. This process recognizes that varying perspectives arise due to situations
and circumstances of people’s experiences. For this reason, our research group chose to work with six culturally distinctive youth groups across the nation. Participants and the researchers were involved in design, data collection, and analysis. It was a collaborative process that “allowed participants to raise their consciousness in order to advance change that would improve their lives -- creating a united voice for reform and change” (Creswell, 2014). This put the researchers in a position of analyzing their role in the research process, and required them to be aware of how involvement affected the relationship between the individual researcher and the participant. Researchers were cognizant of potential bias involved in being participant observers. The conflict encouraged a cyclical model in which “researchers and the participants became part of the research itself through a variety of different processes” (Mertens, 2010). This type of research was necessary because, traditionally, quantitative research does not serve the needs of those who traditionally excluded from the majority. Due to this exclusion, their experiences have not been fully acknowledged or researched. This worldview provided an outline to address issues of power, social justice, and cultural awareness throughout the entire research process (Mertens, 2007).

One methodology used to guide data collection was Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is a methodology that provides a structured and systematic process for creating and analyzing data collected during qualitative research. There was a set of general guidelines used during this type of research. The commonly identified characteristics include concurrent collection and analysis of the data, development of codes to analyze the data rather than hypotheses, development of theories to explain the phenomenon, explicit notetaking, theoretical sampling, and delay of the literature review. Grounded
Theory was primarily used to study interpersonal relationships and larger social processes. This research method is used to bridge interpretations with assumptions through finding meaning in the participants’ actions and intentions (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007). Grounded Theory uses data collected systematically to analyze relationships among different phenomena and then develops a theory. Therefore, the theory is developed through analysis of “reality” rather than statistical evidence (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Finally, Grounded Theory holds that there is a relationship between the researcher, the participants, and the setting, and that all are influential in the outcome of the research (Vanson, 2013). Grounded theory supported our worldview by allowing youth to promote organic change.

To frame this research, ethnography was considered for its deep roots in cultural relevance. Ethnography has a complex history in the area of qualitative research. Initially, ethnography was considered the study of exotic people or cultures; it was the junk drawer of anthropology covering topics such as evolutionary stages of savagery and barbarism, tribal studies, peasants, and also mythical primitive man (Burt, 1998). There were focused efforts to study indigenous people, and it evolved into the study of people in general, focusing on their ability to describe their worldview as well as the outsiders’ observation of the informants’ behavior. The working definition for ethnography is:

...an analytic description of the behaviors that characterize and distinguish cultures or socio-cultural groups….ethnography goes beyond mere “objective analytic description” to include a description and analysis of the knowledge and beliefs that generate and interpret those behaviors...The ethnographer “steps in and out of society”...In other words, ethnographers describe the respondents and their world both as they see it and as the respondent sees it. (pg. 10)
Two vital components are included in ethnography. One is the first-hand observation of the participants and the second is formal and informal interviews with the respondents. For the purpose of this research, and supporting our worldview, both were used. Additionally, ethnography has strengths and weaknesses in its methodology. Small sample sizes and lack of control to test hypotheses make it difficult to generalize findings. Ethnography finds strength in its ability to find patterns and meaningful correlations, to find high quality, reliable data, and to use these findings to prove the strength of a correlation (Walters, 1980). This research has addressed the difficulty with sample sizes and generalization by sampling multiple groups across the United States that represent diversity of demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics. The researchers were hopeful that patterns would emerge that could be transferred to other settings. There is a consensus about which attributes are included in qualitative research. In Table 1, Characteristics of Qualitative Research, the recognized attributes appear alongside the definition of each attribute. This study evoked these attributes within the research design.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Setting</td>
<td>Data will be collected in the environments where the action research will take place. Focus groups and interviews will not take place in a lab or other environment but rather where the problems or experiences occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher is a Key Instrument</td>
<td>The researcher is the actual collector of data through observations, interviews, focus groups, or other interactions with the participants. Though a protocol may be used to give guidance for the process, the researcher is the key generator of information, questions, and tools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Varied Sources of Data**
Qualitative research uses multiple sources of data to explore a topic or phenomenon. These include interviews, audiovisual materials, observations, focus groups, and additional sources of data.

**Inductive and Deductive Data Analysis**
Qualitative researchers use top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top processes to identify patterns and themes in the research they conduct. Once themes are identified researchers revisit their data and identify evidence that support their claims.

**Participants’ Meaning**
The researchers make concerted efforts to identify what the participant is experiencing within the phenomenon and avoids their own bias as researchers.

**Emergent Design**
Qualitative research is emergent meaning that a protocol or plan may not be immediately evident as the process may change or be adjusted to meet the needs of the participants as well as the process. This supports the ideology that the participants guide the research and their experience is truly reflected in the data.

**Reflexivity**
The research reflects on how their own experiences and interpretations shape their perception of the data. Acknowledging how one’s background and experiences shape the outcome of the data is reflected in the research and corrected.

**Holistic Account**
The researcher attempts to build a complete picture of the issue by using all data available. Multiple perspectives and participants shape a unique view of the phenomenon and influence the data.

Sources: Adapted from Creswell, 2014 and Creswell, 2013.

Qualitative methodology was best for this research because of sensitive emergent data. The importance of engagement and changing perspectives is lost when reduced to a numerical system because it does not consider stories and learned experiences. This method is most appropriate for the descriptive nature of the youth and adults’ experiences within their action groups. The ability to identify and explore patterns of behaviors and perspectives through qualitative research is key in exploring the topics of youth engagement and empowerment (Creswell, 2014).
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study used qualitative research to answer the research questions:

Central Question

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect youth and adult perceptions of the ability of youth to influence a) a community heritage, or b) social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. Does implementing YPEM affect the ability of youth and adult mentors to cultivate youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment as it relates to a community heritage or social justice issue?

2. Which aspects of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

This research study used a qualitative research paradigm employing action research methods to collect data from participants in their natural environments through interviews, focus groups, case studies, and observation field notes. Researchers did this to test which youth leadership development strategies would influence participation of youth in community-based programming and which engagement models were most effective in addressing citizen disengagement. The research team developed a sequence of activities to support the stages of YPEM and drafted a guidebook that served as a scope and sequence to action. The expected outcome was the development of a broadly applicable YPEM and accompanying guidebook to empower youth to lead in community heritage and social justice engagement. Researchers worked alongside the youth and their mentors to foster qualities of good leaders, including those skills needed to support
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healthy functioning groups as they engaged collaboratively in social change. The groups, subject to this research, were located in six areas across the United States of America. Each group was unique in its demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics, and each group was functioning at a different level. Throughout this study, researchers observed participants and documented current practices through field notes. The groups were engaged through strategies supported by the SCM, based on where they were upon initial contact. The idea was to build youth leadership in local communities through YPEM and the guidebook, which may prove helpful to support youth in other locations. Each group identified a community heritage or social justice need that was specific to their location. Then, the group worked through engagement strategies with the researcher, to reach desired group goals and personal growth targets. To create a clear picture of each existing youth group’s status quo, the researchers conducted initial interviews with a focus group made up of participants within the participating youth group. Researchers met with the groups to explain the nature of the action research and the goal of the qualitative study. The research-based engagement strategies in the guidebook helped researchers and youth leaders to discuss, brainstorm, and define a need that they wanted address within their community. During the process of the study, researchers observed how youth interacted with varied, researched strategies highlighted in the guidebook, what successes and challenges they appeared to have, as well as other factors, including how their confidence, attitude, and motivation changed during the process. Ideas emerged from the nature of this research model that allowed researchers to be aware of needed adjustments in observation strategies, interview questions and techniques, and sequencing of the engagement model. Researchers
documented the process and highlighted changes as they emerged. In addition to observation and field note documentations, researchers interviewed youth before and after implementation of engagement strategies in the guidebook to gauge whether or not youth felt confident using the strategies presented to them, and what, if anything, they needed. Researchers may have employed other types of qualitative data collection. Following the completion of the group’s defined mission, researchers conducted post-interviews with participant groups in order to document changes in attitudes, beliefs, confidence, and motivation among the youth. Researchers used this to evaluate the engagement strategies in the guidebook that were most useful and informed the evolution of YPEM.

The research process for this study was emergent because some of the processes shifted after the researchers engaged with the participants. Because of changing design, the researchers remained cognizant of their role to facilitate or mentor throughout the process.

This study used the action research method of data collection. Action research is best done in collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem under investigation (Herr & Anderson, 2014). This was a critical component of the methodology recognizing the role of action research in the dissertation. As action research, the methodology followed “a spiral of action cycles in which one undertakes” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, p. 7):

1. To develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening
2. To act to implement the plan;
3. To observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs; and
4. To reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action on, through a succession of cycles
During this process, components of the SCM served as a theoretical guide. During stage one of YPEM, Consciousness of Self and Congruence aligned, and remained a core value for the duration of the research process. In addition, the participants identified a Common Purpose during stage one, which became the project that each group adopted. During stage two, Commitment and Collaboration were integral to the success of the programming, while stage three, Controversy with Civility and Citizenship emerged as the groups began to work intentionally with their local partners and mentors to achieve a common goal. Finally, as a product, researchers developed a new version of YPEM. The updates to the model reflect the outcomes observed through the research process. The new model is included in chapter five of this research study.

Since researchers were cognizant of potential adaptation in the field, both pre-and post-engagement interview questions helped guide the results of the study. Those questions (Appendices 5 & 6), helped determine how engagement strategies affected the perception of each participant’s ability to change a community heritage or social justice issue in a community. This emerged through questions and observations documenting how youth responded to strategies from the guidebook, what influenced youth engagement, and which strategies caused the most significant impact on youth engagement in these educational settings. The interviews and observations also explored how implementing the strategies changed the perceptions of adults working with youth, and whether adult mentoring improved cultural competence in youth and mentors. Figure 3 provides a visual model of the data collection and analysis process, which began with pre-intervention interviews, field notes, and post-intervention interviews.
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**Figure 3: Data Collection Model**

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

In *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*

Brinkmann and Kvale note that the

The qualitative interview seeks knowledge as expressed in normal language; it does not aim at quantification. The interview aims at nuanced accounts of different aspects of the interviewee’s life world. The precision in description and stringency in meaning interpretation in qualitative interviews correspond to exactness in quantitative measures. (p.33)

The qualitative research interview makes sense in contemporary culture, because it addresses -- and further serves to constitute -- that ordinary, reflective self (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The research questions were constructed using literature that speaks to the skill and purpose of the question (Astin & Astin, 2000; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Komives, et al., 2017).
The general interview questions for youth ages 8-13 and 14-25 appear in Appendices 5 & 6. The team developed two sets of questions to engage younger participants as well as older participants. Researchers interviewed youth between the ages of 14-25 with one question set as they have developed a formal language system, and a separate question set allowed the younger children between the ages of 8-13 to understand the concepts at their language level. The team also developed pre-intervention questions for the adult mentors and those questions appear in Appendix 5.

After the initial interview, the researchers formatted questions again to explore the experience that the participants had with the researcher and the project. Once again, these were divided to best meet the needs of the youth participants depending on age and maturity. These questions were designed to capture their experience rather than reflect YPEM. The questions for both youth and adult mentors are listed in Appendix 6.

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

The target population in the study were youth and mentors in civic, educational, and environmental groups. Participants were selected based on their involvement in these groups, which were spread throughout the United States. Participants were recruited via face-to-face contact with a researcher during the initial meeting, or virtually for remote groups. Criteria for selection included: (a) being a youth or mentor participant in the targeted engagement groups; (b) being between the ages of 8-25 if a youth participant; and (c) agreeing to participate in observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. In addition, these participants represented demographics that the research identified as at high risk for disengagement. Rural, low-income, minority, and tribal
populations are commonly disenfranchised communities that have little engagement with local governing, environmental, or educational agencies. Youth were recruited in the community and local organizations with face-to-face interactions, social media, and third-party invitations. The phenomenon studied the impact of disengagement between youth and their community.

The results in this study were drawn from the six participant groups that are showcased in this report, but at the start of the study, a seventh group and researcher followed the research methodology including pre- and post- interviews, implementation of YPEM with a group, observations, analysis of data, and report of findings. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the seventh case study research could not be included in the final analysis of this research study. Including the case (Appendix 7) would have offered another lens into the process and outcomes of YPEM implementation.

The first group was Navajo Youth (Appendix 8) who participated in this volunteer cultural program as a part of a fall season cultural education program. The crew and crew leaders were all Navajo youth, ranging in age from 16-24 years. This group of youth participants was from Navajo National Monument in Shonto, Arizona. The goal of the volunteer program was to serve as park volunteers while learning to protect and educate about a cultural and national park resource and to help them feel more connected to the history of the tribal land and local cultural heritage.

The second group was the Reno-Spark Indian Colony (RSIC) United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) located in Reno-Sparks, Nevada (Appendix 8). The UNITY’s mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, physical, and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth, and to help build a strong, unified, and self-
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reliant Native America through greater youth involvement, (Reno Sparks Indian Colony, UNITY: United National Indian Tribal Youth, 2019). UNITY is a national network organization promoting personal development, citizenship, and leadership among Native American youth. The UNITY group at large was 36 members, ages 13-24, which included the elected board members, President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The six-member focus group consisted of two UNITY elected board members, the President and Vice President and five members. The tribal enrollment office reports a total membership of 1,157 as of September 2018 (Reno Spark Indian Colony, Tribal Government, 2019).

The third group, Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans, included six Latinx youth, ranging in age from 13-18 years, in the Greater New Orleans area (Appendix 8). Based on population estimates, New Orleans has seen a rapid influx in immigration since Hurricane Katrina. In addition, the state of Louisiana is home to an estimated 55,000 undocumented immigrants, about 32% of the local Latinx/Hispanic population (Grimm, 2015). The youth participants in Jovenes de Justicia Social were undocumented, non-English speaking, or Limited English Proficient (LEP) from local public schools. None of the youth had previously engaged in an outside community-based organization or project; however, the mission of the group was to collaborate in research, planning, and the execution of a project that would encourage youth voice in the local community.

The fourth participant group included seven suburban school children ages 14-18 who are members of the Ferguson Youth Advisory Board (Appendix 8). The Ferguson Youth Advisory Board (FYAB) consists of 15 members, ten being youth and five being non-voting adults, one from each ward within the city. Ferguson Youth Advisory Board
members provide insight and feedback on issues relating to youth in the community. They are the official youth voice of the Ferguson Youth Initiative and help determine how citizens use their energies and resources to benefit the public (Ferguson Youth Initiative, 2018). The City of Ferguson is a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, covering 6.19 square miles. Ferguson has 20,728 residents; 45% of the population are males, 55% are females, 27% of the residents are Caucasian, 68% are African Americans, 3.4% are mixed race, 1.9% are Hispanic, and .6% are Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The median income is $41,369 with a poverty rate of 22.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

The fifth participant group was the Elk Prairie 4-H Youth Group, consisting of 15 members, ranging in age from 8-18 years, who resided in rural Phelps County in Missouri (Appendix 8). Phelps County includes twelve towns, spans 672 square miles of land and has an overall population of 44,764. Of its residents, 90.7% are Caucasian; 87% of residents earned a high school diploma while 27.9% have earned a Bachelor’s degree. According to the US Census Bureau (2017) 19.6% of the county’s population live in poverty. The County history is heavily rooted in agriculture, and the Phelps County 4-H group was established, in part, to preserve and advocate for that heritage.

The sixth participant group consisted of six students, ages 8-14 years, from the student council of Berkeley Middle School in Berkeley, Missouri, a northern suburb of St. Louis (Appendix 8). The school was 90% African American with the remaining 10% Asian, Hispanic, multiple race, and White, 54% are female and 46% male. The school population qualifies 100% for government subsidized free and reduced lunches. The mission of the student council is to change the culture of the school for students and staff. (Ferguson-Florissant School District, 2019).
DATA COLLECTION

There is some common agreement among scholars about the core characteristics that define qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). In this research, there were three characteristics considered in the data collection.

The first consideration was the natural setting. Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem understudy (Creswell, 2014). We collected data at the six culturally distinct sites.

Next, the researcher is a key instrument in this research study. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use protocol - an instrument for collecting data - but researchers are the ones who actually gather the information. They do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers (Creswell, 2014). Researchers were aware that their presence in the collection of data affected results. They used interview questions developed by the research team and YPEM that was refined from the data collected through interviews with participants.

Finally, this study invoked multiple sources of data. Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual information rather than relying on a single data source. Then the researchers review all the data, make sense of it, and organize it into categories and themes that cut across all the data sources (Creswell, 2014). This team relied on interviews and observations.

Prior to the implementation of the research, researchers studied current peer-reviewed literature to build an initial YPEM that was used to facilitate the participatory
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group action research. To begin, researchers contacted the youth and adult leaders of the groups to establish consent and convey basic information about the climate, participation, elements, and risks of the research. One area did not have a pre-existing group, so a group was formed by the researcher. These youth were recruited at random after a recruitment notification was put out to local schools in the Greater New Orleans area.

Researchers conducted interviews with youth focus groups and mentors separately. Researchers for these sites each had a personal tie to their respective youth group. Either the researcher was a member of the community, or was a mentor himself. Researchers attempted to maintain a facilitator role, with some variance, within the study. Variations pertinent to the structure are included below.

Once the focus group interviews were complete, the researchers coded and analyzed emergent themes and used to set a baseline to show growth during the study. Researchers met with the groups to implement YPEM pre-intervention strategies and provided training designed around YPEM that was intended to support the group as they developed their action plans for their organizations. Mentors and facilitators worked with youth to define a community heritage or social justice need. The researcher met with the group during regular meeting times to implement the agreed upon strategies that engaged participants to address the identified community heritage or social justice need. For the duration of the study, researchers observed and recorded youth participants’ and mentors’ actions and statements to document their participation, attitudes, beliefs and motivation. Upon completion of the implementation, researchers conducted a post-engagement interview with the focus group and mentor. The research team analyzed the results from both sets of interviews and the observation notes for patterns and themes that were
present across the groups to determine the most effective strategies for increasing youth voice and engagement to empower youth.

Groups engaged in activities that built upon the framework of YPEM including:

Partnerships:

- Community partnerships (DuBois & Keller, 2017; Ritchhart, 2015; Tonge et al., 2012)
- Mentoring programs (Dubois & Keller, 2017)
- Family engagement (Constantino, 2016; Witte & Sheridan, 2011)

Exploration & Growth:

- Cultural competency (Admire-Duncan, 2015)
- Plus Delta (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001)

Actions:

- Problem-based learning (Boyte, 2013; Lokey-Vega & Bonderson, 2017; Ritchhart, 2015)
- Citizenship education (Boyte, 2013; Lukensmeyer, 2012)
- Trust building (Putnam, 2015)

Researchers understood that social change is an organic process that is unique to each group. Each group had access to these strategies, but cultural competence dictated that some groups relied heavily on particular strategies and not on others. Also, groups had existing strategies, which were captured through observations and interviews. The data helped researchers to determine which strategies were most effective in youth voice, engagement, and empowerment.

While the team’s intention was that each group follow a consistent process, however there were extenuating circumstances that may have affected intended implementation of the research. The process variances are explained below.

In the NAVA Volunteer Youth Group, located in Shonto, Arizona, supervisors and program managers of the NAVA Volunteer Youth Group, were contacted by e-mail
and by phone with introduction of the research study, schedules and dates were established for their program starting November 11, 2018. The volunteer youth group agreed to start their project planning; however, the mentor of the group was not strongly committed to the group and was not present for each step of the project or for supporting the process with YPEM guidebook. This unique all-Native American youth program had a higher percentage of communication through virtual communication or by phone due to the researcher working in a location several states away, as well as the youth participants living in rural and remote locations spread throughout the northern Navajo Indian Reservation region. The group consented to take part in the research verbally and then submitted consent forms. The researcher met with the group in person at the beginning of the project, once midway through to provide guidance about YPEM guidebook and to mediate a group conflict, and at the conclusion of the community project to facilitate the post-project interviews.

In the Nevada Native Youth – UNITY Group, located in Reno-Sparks, Nevada, the researcher emailed the youth mentor for the RSIC UNITY group with an overview of the research process and proposal. The RSIC Education Program Manager works closely with the Indian Education Program of the State of Nevada Department of Education (NV-DOE). The researcher and NV-DOE Indian Education staff have collaborated on previous education projects. The IRB process was shared with the RSIC Tribal Council to confirm a Tribal Resolution for the research project. YPEM was shared with the youth mentor and the UNITY members during a UNITY meeting. The researcher conducted the pre-intervention interview over the phone with the youth mentor. Due to time constraints, the researcher conducted the youth focus group interview via video conference. Due to
inclement weather, the group conducted one of the focus group meetings remotely to discuss issues. The youth mentor provided updates on meetings and process, again due to inclement weather and the researcher’s unavailability to attend all the meetings in person. Even though weather was an issue, the communication between the researcher, the youth mentor, and UNITY officers provided consistent communication throughout the process for observations and reflections.

In the Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans group, located in New Orleans, Louisiana, the researcher sent an introductory email to a local Latinx community organizer regarding the goal and objectives of this research study. The researcher and community organizer had a prior relationship due to their participation in previous social justice, community-based initiatives. Because of their prior relationship and because of the purpose of the project, the community organizer assisted with recruitment by disseminating information to Limited English Proficient (LEP) or non-English speaking families whose youth attended various schools within the New Orleans Public School System. The researcher contacted interested parties via telephone to explain the various steps involved in the project. Follow up phone calls and parent meetings helped to ensure confidence and safety of the population recruited for the research. The researcher ensured that all essential documents were translated into Spanish so that they would be easily accessible to families and participants. All participants provided consent, written or verbal, that supported their participation in the project. After the initial interview, one youth ended her participation in the project due to lack of interest.

In the Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, located in Ferguson, Missouri, the researcher contacted the executive director of the group via email at the beginning of the
process to discuss the intentions and goals for YPEM implementation with this particular group. The researcher and executive director knew each other prior to contact via community interactions. The two had a face-to-face meeting and the researcher presented the research purpose and questions to the executive director. The director verbally agreed to participate at that time, and the researcher presented the research proposal to the group and the president of the group. All participants agreed verbally at that time to participate and then followed up with written consent. The researcher changed roles frequently during implementation due to lack of youth leadership, absence of mentor, and time constraints. Initially, the researcher worked with another group, Florissant Youth Advisory Council, but found lack of youth participants and changing leadership difficult for research.

In the Elk Prairie 4-H Youth Group, located in Phelps County, Missouri, the researcher contacted the president of the Elk Prairie 4-H Group via email regarding the nature and status of the research. The president said that she would discuss the possibility of study participation with the youth involved in the program and would await further information from the researcher following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research. In a follow-up email, the president expressed that she had made contact with the group about the potential and that the youth were interested in being involved. Following IRB approval, the president met with the researcher to establish dates and timelines, and obtain signatures from youth, mentor, and parents of the youth. The researcher implemented the research as outlined in methodology and maintained an observation role in most meetings. During two meetings in September and October, when the mentor was absent from the meeting, the researcher was a facilitator.
In the Berkeley Middle School Student Council Group, located in Berkeley, Missouri, a group already existed, so the researcher contacted the principal of the school with information concerning the purpose of the research. He was receptive to the idea and directed the researcher to the mentor for final approval. The mentor was excited to work with YPEM, which she believed would assist her in focusing the youth group. The district has a policy of requiring approval from the administration office before research can be done with students within the district. An application for research and a copy of the IRB was sent to the administration office for approval before research was started. Once this was received, the implementation process began. YPEM was shared with both the mentor and the group. At this point, the president of the group chose not to participate in this research because of numerous prior commitments. Another variation was that during the implementation of the process the mentor was not present, so the researcher had to take on the role of mentor.

The slight variances discussed above had little effect on the outcomes because PAR recognizes that variations are expected. In fact that outcomes support the idea that the process was enhanced because in spite of variations, the groups were able to navigate through the YPEM and guidebook. The process is robust enough to handle variations as they arise.
DATA ANALYSIS

The following section provides an overview of data analysis. The research questions are:

Central question:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect youth and adult perceptions of the ability of youth to influence a) a community heritage, or b) social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. Does implementing YPEM affect the ability of youth and adult mentors to cultivate youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment as it relates to a community heritage or social justice issue?

2. Which aspects of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

Researchers analyzed both pre-and post- interviews and observation field notes based on these questions. First, each researcher transcribed the interviews. Then, using Dedoos software, each researcher coded the interviews. Finally, each researcher reviewed the work of the other researchers on the team to confirm consistency and accuracy. Creswell (2014) suggests researchers with distinct theories that they want to test should create a preliminary codebook that will evolve, and change based on the information learned during data analysis. Codebooks should reference both codes for theory and data. The codebook itself should reference at least the code, a definition of the code and examples of the code (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCullough, 2011). Researchers in this study followed this advice and created codes for the SCM and YPEM
strategies. The codes assisting researchers in evaluating participants’ knowledge and awareness of the SCM based upon the definition of the model’s core values (HERI, 1996):

1. Individual Values
   a. Consciousness of Self
   b. Congruence
   c. Commitment

2. Group Process Values
   a. Collaboration
   b. Common Purpose
   c. Controversy with Civility

3. Community/Societal Values
   a. Citizenship
   b. Change

In the qualitative analysis, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously (Merriam, 1998). Researchers coded and analyzed the anecdotal notes from interviews using a codebook for similar themes. The group coded one interview together to develop consistency regarding code meaning and application. Following the initial coding, researchers coded their own interviews and another team member’s interviews, then used a reflective methodology to gather information on similar themes.

Researchers analyzed each interview individually, and then compared results across the interviews using a reflective method of analysis (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). Similarities and differences in themes helped explain different perspectives of the participants as related to youth empowerment. The team incorporated these similarities as a part of the final process to update YPEM and the guidebook. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the data collection process used in this research study.
Figure 4. Data Analysis: Coding Process

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The intent of results of this PAR is to provide a relevant process and guidebook that can assist others who work in similar settings or with similar populations. The nature of unique data collection and sampling selection in qualitative research in its methods can threaten external validity. In this study, the research team took great care to provide a thick description of the research process, and to document a full report of the care used in the collection process. By doing so, the reliability and internal validity remained stable (Payne & Williams, 2005). The researchers followed the ethical structure approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
In order to guarantee soundness and rigor in this study, the researchers used a variety of techniques. The team used thick descriptions of procedures and content to convey the findings of the research and assist in providing a relevant model (Payne & Williams, 2005). The team used between method triangulation to converge different data points and alleviate the chance of personal biases influencing data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Each group was provided an excerpt from their case study to review for validity. This process was critical for allowing each group to verify that the data based upon the content matched their intent. The team’s research involved collecting data from people and about people. All of these experiences introduced a possibility for subjective interpretations of the emergent phenomenon and created a potential for bias (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000).

Each researcher included work supervisors and other outside leadership staff in the conversations about the research topic and how it might impact youth programming. It is noted that selecting a site without vested interests is ideal (Creswell, 2014). Selecting a site to study in which you have an interest in outcomes is not a good idea. It does not allow for the objectivity required for quantitative research or for the full expression of multiple perspectives that is needed by qualitative research.

In compliance with the regulations of the IRB, researchers obtained permission to conduct the research; this included signed consent and assent forms as needed. The researchers had an academic advisor, who was aware of the background of each member of the research team and approved the research study. The researchers’ committee members were also familiar with the study and were supportive of moving forward with
the research. They advised the researchers on procedures and data analysis as needed throughout the process.

The topic of this study did fall into the sensitive category because within the six groups there were subject population who were not 18. The researchers working with youth who were under 18 worked with parents of program participants and obtained appropriate permissions. This included protecting their anonymity, respecting their youth voice, and checking data for content validity during the collection and coding process.

The team audio recorded the interviews with the participants and conducted the study in a normal social setting on location or via remote technologies.

The team drafted an informed consent that assured the participant rights. The form allowed participants to agree to be involved in the study, and informed the participants of their rights. The form included a statement related to informed consent was included in the interview to reflect compliance by participation. As promised, the researchers protected anonymity of participants. The study identifies participants with pseudonyms for use in the description and reporting of the results. All study data, including interview tapes, and transcripts, were kept in a secure location and destroyed after a reasonable period. Researchers informed participants of the potential to disseminate summary data to the professional community.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

This section provides information concerning the researcher positionality for each participant group. According to the *SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*,
Positionality refers to the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study—the community, the organization or the participant group. The position adopted by a researcher affects every phase of the research process, from the way the question or problem is initially constructed, designed and conducted to how others are invited to participate, the ways in which knowledge is constructed and acted on and, finally, the ways in which outcomes are disseminated and published. Following is a description of the outsider and insider roles of researchers and a discussion of the multiple dimensions influencing how researchers may relate to the action research participants. (Rowe, 2014)

The researcher working with the Navajo youth volunteer group initially got involved when several community youth independently arrived at Navajo National Monument asking to volunteer for the visitor center and in their educational and interpretive programs. The youth were asking to earn volunteer hours for a few reasons, personal to each of them, like gaining hours for their school’s National Honor Society club and building their resume for future job opportunities. As this group of youth came together in the late fall of 2018, the researcher used this unique opportunity to continue this action research project with them as a focus group. This research highlights a pivotal moment in the researcher’s life because as a child, she spent time with her Grandmother being told stories of her culture and was taught the Diné language in her hogan. The researcher has interpretive roots that run deep with her Navajo (Diné) homeland and her passion for her research emerged through formative experiences at Navajo National Monument in Arizona, with past studies in Business and Educational Leadership - at Northern Arizona University. She started her career by volunteering at a National Park and currently has 21 years with the National Park Service as a Park Ranger Interpreter. The researcher has spent untold hours creating meaningful education programs about Native American history and culture, and other subjects related to the Monument’s
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

resources. She centered this research within her community where she has lived for most of her life and is now raising her children.

The researcher working with the UNITY Program has been working with the partners who manage the Indian Education Program for the State of Nevada. The researcher does not work at the Reno Sparks Indian Colony or for the Department of Education but does work for the agency that funds and collaborates with youth programming. This includes working for a federal agency that collaborates with tribal partners. The researcher initially reached out to the Reno Sparks Indian Colony (RSIC) Education Coordinator who is the supervisor of the youth mentor for the UNITY group. During the course of the research, the researcher was an observer, but also a participant in some of the UNITY meetings and events. However, due to inclement weather the researcher, youth mentor, and youth participants also used teleconferencing, texting, and email to engage and keep consistent communication during the YPEM process. The youth referred to the researcher as “auntie,” and referred to as a “sister” by the youth mentor. The group welcomed the researcher as the YPEM process progressed, which heightened the level of collaboration and enhanced communication.

The researcher working with Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans served as a researcher, observer, and participant. After an already established organization backed out of serving as the participating organization, the researcher created this particular youth group for the purpose of this project, with the assistance of a local community organizer. Due to a lack of interest from additional adult youth leaders and potential mentors, the researcher served as the mentor for this group throughout the implementation of YPEM. The researcher is a formal educator who previously worked in
youth development in the City of New Orleans. His prior experience involved engaging with the demographic of young people involved in this part of the project.

The researcher working with the Ferguson Youth Advisory Board had been an acquaintance with the executive director of FYAB for just over a year. She met the executive director through other community events as they lived in the same area. The researcher did not work with the executive director nor did she work with any agency that works with the executive director. All such experiences introduced a possibility for subjective interpretations of the phenomenon being studied and created a potential for bias (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000). The researcher included other local government officials in conversations regarding the research and how the outcomes may impact further youth programming in the area. The researcher reached out to the executive director of Ferguson Youth Advisory Board to initiate this portion of the project.

The researcher for the Elk Prairie 4-H youth group is employed by the same local school district as the mentor, but the two do not work with the same age level or in the same building. Because the school district only has one high school, the researcher and mentor have children the same age and are acquainted through youth sports. This connection introduced a possibility for subjective interpretations of the phenomenon being studied and created a potential for bias (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000). During the course of the research, the researcher was both a participant and an observer. The primary role of leadership for the community heritage project was upon the youth with guidance from the mentor. During the normal course of implementation, the researcher observed the youth president and group as they worked through YPEM
process, however, on two occasions when the youth mentor was absent from the group, the researcher’s role shifted to active participant.

The researcher for the Berkeley student council worked within the guidelines set out by the IRB process. Special care was taken to ensure that all safeguards were met, and anonymity was maintained for participants throughout the study, since the group fell into the sensitive category, with participants who were 8-13 years old. Positionality for the researcher changed during the research process. The researcher had planned to take an observational stance only. However, when the mentor was not present, the researcher had to step into the mentor role. The researcher’s advisor was aware of this change and conducted an external review of data analysis ensure reliability within the study.

RESEARCHER PROCESS

In order to complete this research, the group had to work within their positionality and personal bias as a team. The researchers formed policies and procedures and to work together and honor each other’s unique sets of ideas, cultural background, and physical space within the United States. The group set up norms early in the research phase to support such a large group of researchers across a large physical space. In addition, the group also set up agendas for work times to keep things organized and led as facilitators and note-takers. The group struggled with internal and external conflicts that were based on personal history, time constraints, physical location, and extenuating circumstances. The group credits their success with maintaining organization, holding each other accountable, and sitting with the discomfort of challenging our biases and cultural differences.
We found that we mirrored our research groups in many ways. It was difficult to edit each other’s work due to the emotional content of the research. In addition, there were language and dialect differences due to members speaking multiple languages. We found that by using strategies that we had researched (frequent communication, revisiting norms, engaging in controversy with civility), we were able to be successful in communicating and researching uncomfortable topics.

Chapter three provided an overview of the research, including an overview of each case study, and how the SCM helped to build YPEM. It also explained the sampling process for participant selection, data collection, interview processes, data analysis, validity and reliability, and researcher positionality. This research design is critical to providing an infrastructure to the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this co-authored, qualitative, participatory action research study was to examine how arming youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) to identify and engage a) a community heritage, or b) social justice need would affect their perceptions and abilities to address such a need. The first three chapters introduced the current state of civic engagement for adults and youth and outlined a compelling rationale for empowering emerging generations. The research team further explored issues related to citizen disengagement, the consequences of that disengagement in communities, and the barriers that prevent engagement. Through a review of literature, the team (1) identified research-based strategies that are integral to the success of youth empowerment programming, (2) developed a model to guide youth and mentors through a process of empowerment, and (3) crafted and implemented a guidebook with proven engagement strategies to help lead the groups through the process of empowerment (Appendix 9). In chapter three, the research team outlined the methodology design used to guide site selection, data collection, and analysis. In this chapter, the team presents research findings providing insight into YPEM implementation and outcomes through the presentation of six case studies.

We present the results from each case study below, first as separate case studies, then as a cross-case analysis that synthesizes the six case study results. For each case study, we present participant demographic information first, followed by case specific findings. These results address the following research questions:
Central question:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect youth and adult perceptions of the ability of youth to influence a) a community heritage, or b) social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. Does implementing YPEM affect the ability of youth and adult mentors to cultivate youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment as it relates to a community heritage or social justice issue?

2. Which aspects of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

YPEM CASE STUDIES

The following case studies tell the story of YPEM in each site. Researchers shared a guidebook (Appendix 9) with group mentors and youth leaders, which has a series of research-supported activities to facilitate engagement in the process of empowerment through YPEM. Table 2 provides an overview of the participant youth demographic information for each site. The table includes the name of the group, the age of the participants, where the group was located, and the race/ethnicity of the participants. Additional information about each group can be found in Appendix 8.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

Table 2

*Participant Youth Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Name</em></th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tr>
<td>Asdzaa Nez</td>
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<td>Ashkii Kee</td>
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<td>Kayla</td>
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<tr>
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**CASE STUDY FIVE: ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH**

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**CASE STUDY SIX: BERKELEY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

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*Participants identified by pseudonym*
CASE STUDY ONE: NAVAJO YOUTH

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a) a community heritage, or b) social justice need among a variety of demographic groups across the United States. This sector was a rural remote Native American Shonto community located in the Navajo Indian reservation in northern Arizona.

NAVAJO YOUTH: Participants and Process

The NAVA Youth group, consisted of five rural Native American students who resided on the Navajo Indian reservation, in the Shonto community, in northern Arizona. The members ranged in age from 16-24, and the group originally started with four females, and one male student, who were volunteers at Navajo National Monument. Participants signed up to do volunteer work for the National Park Service at Navajo National Monument on their own and were not recruited or strategically organized by an existing program. The group worked together for eight weeks from November through December, 2018.

The Navajo Nation is a Native American territory covering about 17,544,500 acres, occupying portions of northeastern Arizona, southeastern Utah, and northwestern New Mexico in the United States. This is the largest land area retained by a Native American tribe, with a population of roughly 350,000 as of 2016. The Shonto community is located in the northeastern part of the Navajo Nation with a population of 621 according to the 2016 census from Data USA. This rural area of Shonto consists of
primarily Navajo residents, who also self-identify as the Diné people, according to their own language. The latest census in 2016, there were 42.7 times more Native residents (598 people) in Shonto, AZ than any other race or ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

The Shonto community has a Preparatory school that is funded by grant money from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The families who reside in this part of the Navajo Nation are primarily living in remote areas with miles and miles of unnamed and unmaintained dirt roads and where indoor plumbing and running water are not available and electricity is a luxury. The Shonto Preparatory operates as both a bus routed school and also a dormitory school for students with no direct access for the daily bus routes. The families who choose to have their child attend a larger state-funded public school with perceived better educational opportunities have to travel up to an hour each way every day. Lack of access to the internet is a barrier to students in the rural areas making it a necessity to stay after school or stay in dormitories at the Shonto Preparatory School to complete online homework assignments from teachers. This makes school days very long for the students commuting from the Shonto area.

Interviews with the participants and their mentor were conducted prior to the implementation of the model and after completion of the project to measure growth of the participants. The YPEM guidebook was introduced to both the mentor and the group during the initial interviews and the group received a copy of the guidebook. During the pre-intervention interview, the adult mentor, who is a Native American male from the Hopi Tribe, was asked a variety of questions that ranged from the importance of citizenship to youth-impacted change. All thirteen questions addressed various aspects of
the SCM as well as research-based practices intended to measure how the model affects perception.

In the initial interview, the youth mentor referred to the community as an inherited part of the individuals, who see themselves as inseparable from what they are born into. The mentor in this case and field work kept his involvement with the youth group at a distance, due to his insight on youth development, his own work level, and work responsibilities. The YPEM guidebook was presented to the group and used throughout the project. It contains support for a mentor, but in this case, the mentor was absent a majority of the time. The lack of consistent attendance by a mentor for the youth group was both a disadvantage and an advantage. It was advantageous for the group to work truly independently with their own ideas, thoughts, planning, and form of self-governing for the project they chose to work on. Although we indicated that the mentor was absent, he was still in the general area accessible if needed, and also could intervene if there was a situation requiring his help.

The Native American youth volunteers identified their common interests to not only gain experience for future jobs and enhance their resumes with community service through their school clubs such as the National Honor Society, but also to reach a mutual goal of planning a community project. The members of the group have lived in the Shonto area most of their lives, although two members had moved away for school in a metropolitan area located hours from their home community, Shonto. When the youth speak of home, they refer to the place where their grandparents or elders have lived, where grazing areas, homesite leases, and/or cornfield permits are issued to their family on the Indian reservation by the US government.
This group brainstormed independently, with many ideas, from the very beginning and transitioned intermittently back and forth to the YPEM and guidebook; they collaboratively engaged in creating a project plan. In observing the youth group’s actions toward planning, they were excited and eager to be creative. The group quickly identified their reason for being in the group and were clear about gaining experience in planning a community event, developing insight into the local Native American culture, and fulfilling a school club requirement for the National Honor Society. The energy was positive and loud, so the norm of collaboration they initially identified was soon unrecognizable. In the planning, a bulletin board containing their notes helped them focus as they developed the project.

The NAVA Youth group brainstormed for several meetings on local community needs with activity ideas such as trash pickups, community walks, or a program that could be organized. They wrote notes on tablets as they narrowed down their thoughts of what they would like to do for the community while also moving toward attaining personal goals. Nizhoni, who had also been selected to be a student worker at the monument, recapped and finalized the decision to work on a community project regarding the night sky. “The night sky is not only an overlooked natural resource of the National Park Service, but also a cultural resource for many Native Americans,” Nizhoni added. The youth group referred to mutual thoughts of “doing something different and meaningful to the community, not like the usual.” “Keep the group’s ideas up where it can be a daily reminder,” requested Kee. In response, one student quickly came out with a dry erase board to record the group’s ideas, goals, and project plans and set it up where they would see it each time they came together.
The older students, Nizhoní and Kee, took the lead in recognizing mutual ideas and also jotting them down onto the board. They mutually narrowed down their reasons for the night sky project to “stay connected to the main reasons for doing this project, which was; education, culture, and entertainment.” Once they settled on the project as a night sky community activity, to be hosted and facilitated at the monument, and identified the purpose as education, culture, and entertainment, they began implementation planning: find a date, identify partners for the event, and create an itinerary of the event day.

The youth group was interviewed during the initial planning stage of their project, and those who were present seemed nervous and not yet fully understanding of the concept of their community or issues important to them. Several commonly agreed issues were discussed: garbage, or trash, and illegal dumping around the community hurting the environment was brought up by two students; lack of animal care or stray dogs in the community was also another issue brought up by two students; each student, however, mentioned decreased levels of their Native American cultural knowledge as a common community issue, such as the stories, songs, and language. As the students independently maneuvered through their project planning, answered interview questions on conscientious thoughts on personal points of views laced by the social change model, it occurred to pose several interesting emerging thoughts, which also re-emerged during the post interviews as they reflected back on their experience and projects.
NAVAJO YOUTH: Theme One

*Youth/young adult participants were ready and able to fill an adult leadership vacuum.*

The mentor of this youth group chose to lead this group with a hands-off approach based on his perception that these young adults could independently lead themselves in forming, planning, and implementing their identified project with minimal mentor management.

Before I just let them be because they are adult enough to work things out. I felt that because that's what I like to do is to allow them to try and figure things out first, and then, if they just can't come to any kind of resolution, I step in and try and work through things. I approached all of them about what was going on just to get an idea from all parties and it was a simple thing really, and once they figured that out, they were able to work through that in and get everything squared away and they had a pretty good start party. (Mentor Masa, personal communication, March 26, 2019)

When the Mentor made it known that his responsibilities would not allow him to be present at every meeting, the youth embraced their independence and adjusted to the change to a co-leadership model. The YPEM guidebook is set up to work through projects with the support of a designated mentor, but this group quickly organized to prepare for ownership of their group and spearheaded their own direction.

Our mentor really had full faith in all of us too to really be responsible for the project. I think he pretty much gave us a lot of flexibility in what we like to do with this project and if anything, he wouldn't really micromanage us. He would step in and say something if anything was really critical that we couldn't do. (Ashii Nataani, Personal communication, March 21, 2019)
NAVAJO YOUTH: Theme Two

Youth leaders created a positive communication environment by focusing on civility, conflict resolution, and self-awareness.

The group was on a high with their independence, but they soon learned about team and group communication skills needed to maintain civility through conflict. Conflict arose as they worked to refine ideas and determine the roles and responsibilities of members. In observing the two older team members, Ashii Kee and Nanibaa Nizhon, they sometimes found themselves in gridlock over their ideas. Communication skills covered with their rules and norms of collaboration was soon off on the wayside as they each voiced their thoughts on how to lead the delegation of work and the timeframe it would be complete. The escalation of conflict increased stress and decreased trust among the group with an accompanying increase in passive aggressive behaviors. In this case, one person had a strong direct and possibly overbearing character while the other was much more lenient, but both had highly creative skills. The situation was not getting better as the two clearly were changing the dynamics of the group, and Nizhoní finally decided to get the mentor involved for guidance and direction.

We started out really good. When we first started planning a project, it was at least a month and a half before the event, and we sat down with the whiteboard and everything. We wrote down what our goals were for this event, who we wanted to attend this event and even wrote down a number on how many people we wanted to attend the event and see if that would have been achieved. We wrote it down, we really discussed it, and I thought it was going good. (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, March 22, 2019)

Clearly, the youth group was empowered with their independent opportunity to create change with understanding that they were in charge of their project. Energy and
enthusiasm was high, and the freedom to create and brainstorm was a clear strength to help them engage in the process.

Further into it, we started to have creative differences and disagreements. At first it didn't work out so well, because it was kind of like, one person saying something and not a person saying something else. And there's a lot of passive aggressiveness especially from my end because I'm not a person who likes to face conflict and I was just not sure what to do because there were some parts of the planning process that I absolutely didn't agree on with the other students and it was just really difficult to get it through. I tried to voice my concerns and I felt like it was being unheard and, this other person, who is a park employee suggested that we go to our mentor to bring this issue up with him and that's when he helped us resolve a conflict by us sitting down together and talking it out. And we decide it from there on out we wouldn't have all this passive aggressiveness between us like if we had an issue, we would bring it up with them before kind of going to someone else to solve the problems for us. After that, after the whiteboard process, after our conflict, we kind of got together and brought our resources to the table on how we can make this a successful event. (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, March 22, 2019)

This youth found her way to get through this unpleasant communication problem by realizing that she needed to keep her civility through the conflict and identifying the strategy through self-awareness.

It's just that there were different opinions and ideas that were thrown into the mix and it was just one individual making a huge difference. You know because initially it sounded like everybody else is on the same page because they were coming up to me and talking to me about what was happening and what their ideas were. I was involved in that part and I just thought, this sounds like you guys pretty much have everything in hand and you know it sounded pretty good, and then we had one individual who came in a bit later who had her own ideas about things and so that's when the situation kind of developed. They were not completely at odds but just different opinions about things and ideas that didn't really mesh throughout the process. Eventually in talking with me and the group leader, they came to a resolution and got things squared away and like I said turned out to be a pretty good star party. (Mentor Masa, personal communication, March 26, 2019)
The mentor was forming a neutral focus on the conflict and careful to not take sides, but to also allow for the group to create a safe and positive way to address the conflict that had crept up on the youth groups project.

Allowing them to really work this whole thing through, I felt they have the ability to communicate and understand certain things with what the intent of this was for, knowing that this was to benefit the younger school age kids. I think maybe that's what made the difference in wanting to really work this through, because it wasn't just for them it was for an audience and they wanted to make this a good outcome, so eventually they got together again and were able to work things out so that things panned out for all of them. They seem to be really happy afterwards. (Mentor Masa, personal communication, March 26, 2019)

This mediating process with the support of the Mentor Masa, was a lesson in navigating controversy with civility. Mentor Masa gathered the youth group, had them talk through their problems, and re-examined the “why” of their project, which was their common goal. Reflecting on the situation, the group recognized that communication was very important to staying committed to their common purpose.

NAVAJO YOUTH: Theme Three

Youth leaders facilitated an exploration of community within the context of loss.
   a. An understanding of community required Navajo youth to think deeply about their place and the issues embedded in their day-to-day life.
   b. An understanding of community required Navajo youth to grapple with a history of cultural loss.
   c. An understanding of community helped Navajo youth understand traditional perspectives with the night sky and share that perspective with others.

An emerging thought started with students who answered questions about how to resolve issues in their community questioned the dissertation interview question because, they did not know how to answer this. Contrary to those who live in towns, rural youth, whose nearest neighbors live two to three miles away, (and who do not see a Chapter house or a Township Office just down the street), had more difficulty determining what
made up their community and did not know how to address or approach changing their issues. Living in very isolated and remote locations, which meant limited exposure to community meetings, little access to the local governing offices because of limited transportation, and minimal support from adults who could offer guidance on the process of community governing practice created barriers when trying to answer questions about how to make change. Further, while speaking with Mentor Masa, he stated that Native Youth needed to “know their place, and to know that there are rules set up for them,” and that those relative positions of adult and youth should be respected. This brought up questions about whether the YPEM is a suitable guide that could be effective for Native American youth living in remote areas on Indian reservations, or whether it had to be adjusted to work with this demographic.

NAVAJO YOUTH: Theme Four

*By understanding traditional perspectives toward the night skies, Navajo youth and young adults became better equipped to navigate space between traditional culture and the modern world.*

This research shed light on cultural and heritage struggles of this demographic of a Native American reservation youth. This demographic also represents the fourth generation since one of their peoples’ most traumatic historical events of ethnic cleansing by the U.S. government, the Navajo Long Walk of 1864. They shared thoughts about how their culture is fading away, and that the use of their Native language is decreasing. Although mentioned by the older Native American mentor as something that the youth these days are not mindful of, the conversations with these youth contradicted this. The project started with brainstorming community issues, but as discussions continued, they
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coalesced around a strong commitment toward their social justice issues of education, culture, and entertainment.

I think there are people in this area who don't have access to water or not have easy access to water. Again, going back to how I grew up, I didn't even have running water at my house until I was in six grade and with that, I think my parents installed a gravity fed system. We were tired of waiting on the tribe or the government or whoever to buy a water system for us. So, I think it is part of my community, and again as I explained in the first answer with illegal dumping going on here. Another issue is how the younger generation, we're not very knowledgeable, or we don't speak our language fluently, so that's another issue important to me. Again, the youth are the future of the community and will have a big impact on them. So, I think the youth have a very important role in the community. But, right now, I think they should be really close to our culture as well as local government. How things will play out in the future because it will be all on to them later. (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, December 16, 2019)

This project designated culture as one of the three most important issues to address in programming cultural perspectives of the night sky from the local Native American tribes. The night sky has been an extremely important tool for survival of the ancestral people; yet today, the teaching of this knowledge and the skills to navigate by the night sky is diminished.

As mentioned by the mentor, who holds onto hope, but nevertheless views the youth as disconnected, distracted, and lost from the old ways.

I just have the hope that if you can provide something to just one kid that will grow in one and then grow in another and so you know it's just that being optimistic about things, this is what keeps me motivated. (Mentor Masa, personal communication, March 26, 2019)

He also had commented that the adults should do more with being involved and listening to the youth. There is a middle ground not being met, and this hope arises from reflection on the Native American youth group by the older Native American mentor.
I mean that's where we have a huge problem because we don't listen to the youth very much. We don't go out and solicit their input into things or question what they need and what they're lacking. We can see it and suppose that this is what they need, but you know in reality they may be asking for some other things and some of it is probably more like emotional or something like that, that they need. Not tangible things, but I think there's others that just want that companionship as well. And so not just my community, I think abroad on the reservations where were not like that when we grew up in different times, different things that affect us in different areas. You know, we don't consider those things currently that are causing so much pressure on these kids that it's difficult for them and to try and really understand that we have to start opening our ears and paying attention to their needs as well, but you know there's things that you can probably do which isn't so enormous or maybe out of the way that we can provide to them. (Mentor Masa, personal communication, March 26, 2019)

Based on this field study sample, older Native American generation hope to teach the youth their culture and heritage. As the personal communications with the group illustrated, youth think about this just as much as the elders. The Native American mentor admitted that there should be some attention paid to the youth. If the two groups would slow down to hear one another, they will find some congruence since the Native youth shared that they have genuine desire towards learning about their culture. This sheds light on another issue, the struggle to balance which “citizenship” to strengthen. The Native American youth face pressures to balance the strengthening of their citizenship in the western modern world versus their citizenship in the Native American culture.

NAVAJO YOUTH: YPEM Strategies

During the research project with the Native American youth, several strategies emerged as supportive of the growth and empowerment of the youth groups. Table 3, summarizes those strategies and offers examples from the research.
**Effective Strategies for Participant Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent and Frequent</td>
<td>“And he also helped us with conflict resolution when those issues mentioned in question five came up. He actually sat down with us all together where we could all talk it out as a group on what our creative differences were and look at what the issue was.” (personal communication, March 21, 2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Voice</td>
<td>“I feel like I have a better idea of how to make something happen in my community. Because with as a group with planning. And. I’m younger. I have a better use of my voice when it comes to engaging with other youth and that’s all. Ha-ha! I feel like with the majority on everything, it’s best to have a voice of the youth cause when you’re working with other younger kids and you’re a kid yourself, it’s like equal, we understand them on an equal level.” (personal communication, March 19, 2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varied Perspectives</td>
<td>“Working together as a group helped since everyone's brainstorming and you get to look at different sides. I Would say if someone doesn't agree with certain things then we can look on their side.” (personal communication, March 19, 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer to Peer</td>
<td>“I feel like with the majority on everything, it's best to have a voice of the youth cause when you're working with other younger kids and you're a kid yourself, it’s like equal, we understand them on an equal level.” (personal communication, March 19, 2019)</td>
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**NAVAJO YOUTH: YPEM and Overall Reflections**

At the end of the research, the youth were presented with a diagram that represented the steps of the YPEM. The youth were then asked to tell the researcher in his or her own words what the visual meant.
I'm observing this diagram, which is like a pyramid, and at the bottom is partnerships, exploration, growth, and actions. It's showing the three different sections: individual group, society, and community all pointing arrows together. What that makes me think of is, that it all obviously connects, because you really can't achieve certain things on your own like going to an individual with a consciousness of self. I can't do something on my own like starting up a project, but certain people who have those same passions and are driven as you, and that is where a group comes in and where you can collaborate with them, and with you working with somebody else is just so much better than trying to do it on your own. You are able to involve the society and community nearby communities as well. So it all really ties together and then what really supports that is the partnerships and learning new things. (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, December 16, 2019)

Youth were shown the variation of the YPEM and asked to reflect on the process.

Observing the Native youth group as they expressed their community issues brought to light their concerns about the diminishment of their Native American cultural knowledge. The group also chose a project to affect change. The group wanted to make a difference in this community issue suggesting that there is power in youth, as in the comment below.

Personal and community issues most important to me would be the preservation of the Navajo culture and I feel that way because I know that the language is slowly fading away and I know that a lot of the culture is slowly fading away as well. It's more of like I said, the language and the stories, the clan, the way that the clan system works, the stories of rug weaving, and the way people used to make money back then is slowly going away too. Ashii Naatani, (personal communication, March 21, 2019)

With respect to the adult mentor’s comments, these kids made a contradictory statement through their work and voice. The Mentor’s comment expressed strong concerns about youth not having higher consideration for their culture and heritage.

Well hopefully I mean things change. There's so much influence and I think that's the bigger problem. Trying to work something in that allows them to understand what they are losing out on by not really grasping on to their heritage. I think all communities are like that, you've got a group
that still wants to, or maybe have that kind of background because they grew up with their grandparents or were around things like that a lot more. But we have kids these days that are just kind of basically stuck to TV radios and other influences where that kind of appeals to them more so because that's what is in the mainstream. These days it's a real struggle to try and instill some of these things, but so long you try maybe down the road they'll understand that you know this is something that is going to be more valuable to them because this is where they came from and this is who they are. So, just do your best, to do what you can to provide information to them. (Mentor Masa, personal communication, March 26, 2019)

This highlights a gap between the youth, who feel worthy and ready to make change in their cultural issues and the older community members, who need to give them that chance and opportunity through trained, present, and ready adult mentors. The communication from both sides express their common concerns about preserving, protecting, and educating the next generation about their culture and heritage. Both the older and younger generations need to meet in the middle with good intent and with the skills that will get the two to become a stronger team that can advocate for each other and not against one another, thus building a strong structure while empowering youth.
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CASE STUDY TWO: NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a) a community heritage, or b) social justice need among a variety of demographic groups across the United States. The United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) group is a youth group that is a part of the Reno-Spark Indian Colony (RSIC), located in Reno-Sparks, Nevada.

NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: Participants and Process

Deryn, the youth mentor, recruited members to establish the youth council and worked through the process provided by UNITY Inc. (UNITY Inc., 2017). The How to Establish a UNITY Youth Council handbook provided a process for Deryn to move forward on developing the RSIC UNITY. The RSIC UNITY group held elections in July 2018 to establish the first RSIC UNITY Board.

Deryn is a paid youth mentor for the Colony. In her role, she works on multiple projects and programming for the RSIC youth. She also includes collaborating with local Native American Youth through the local schools as well. This includes providing transportation, food, event planning, and outreach events. She works on collaboration for Native American Youth, youth sporting events, team building events, official travel that youth participate in for Tribal activities, and building relationships with outreach centers at higher education facilities, such as the University of Nevada, Reno. Deryn provides transportation for youth and even travels with them to community events. She helps to build confidence through mentoring youth.
The importance of her position is functioning as a connector to foster intergenerational collaboration within the Colony. In Deryn’s perspective, she noted how critical her role was for building a bridge between youth and adults. Deryn is currently on RSIC Tribal Council as the Treasurer. She brings her network of connections to the role of youth mentor; this includes following the Tribal Council structure of elected officers. According to Deryn, the goal of following this structure is to facilitate the youth seeing themselves on Tribal Council someday. This provides important infrastructure for UNITY. The youth noted the importance of her mentorship role during their interviews. Expectations for the advisors are outlined in the UNITY handbook. The advisors are key to having effective youth councils. The strength of the advisor determines the success of the youth council. To be successful, an advisor must earn the respect, trust, and confidence of youth council members, their parents, and officials of the sponsoring organization (UNITY, Inc., 2017).

The UNITY board includes the elected board members, President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The youth create the agendas and run the meetings. The duties of members and officers are in the UNITY Constitution and Bylaws. The focus group consisted of seven UNITY members whose ages ranged from fifteen to twenty-two years old. This group included two UNITY officers, the President and Vice President. In the beginning of YPEM, the youth spoke about how community trauma influenced their identity. When discussing issues in their community, the UNITY focus group talked about the differences in their local reservation and community compared to the Native Youth on the east coast.
Everyone is becoming really institutionalized, and it’s that mind frame that we are not used to, you know what I mean. (Jonah, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

The UNITY members understood it was up to them to move the community forward. When speaking to the youth about having the power to change something in their community to make it a better place to live for everyone, they discussed what they would like to change, but they also reflected on needs to make change within the community. They need, “community involvement” (McKenna, personal communication, February 16, 2019), “support” (Dalia, personal communication, February 16, 2019), and “a group of UNITY is the catalyst to get those things done” (Thalia, personal communication, February, 16, 2019), in order to make change within the community.

The focus group met and brainstormed ideas. Based upon YPEM they reflected upon and analyzed the model, in the end putting themselves at Stage Three. During a UNITY meeting, the president was late, and the youth mentor made note of it. The members reminded Deryn that Faith had a quick call and she had informed them ahead of time per the norms (personal communication, February 7, 2019). This was evidence that the group had established norms. If someone is late, they have failed already, per the group’s norms. The youth mentor stood corrected, as the president walked in the room. Faith jumped right in and called the meeting to order. This showed evidence of Stage 4 (revise team norms), which they referred back to as they realized norms were important to the process.

In their meetings, they also covered old business; this included past and new community events. They organize these events to raise money and give back to the community; these strong partnerships with the larger community, along with celebrating
their success, provided evidence of Stage Five functioning (personal communication, February 7, 2019).

The UNITY focus group used the initial conversations with the researcher as a foundation for brainstorming ideas for a project.

We got ideas from the talk that we had. And since we already answered those questions, we just based ideas off what we answered. Then soon enough, we said, “a food pantry’s good”, but then we thought about how adults can go out and do that themselves. It's hard getting food, when you are in a tough situation, but we thought about the youth and how harsh it is for them and how it impacts them more so. We put just a teen pantry instead. (Thalia, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

The group continued to link the problem and solution of the food pantry back to the overarching need for better education.

Yeah, so we thought about what our problems were first. And the most problem that usually comes up, is education. Because a lot of kids, don't worry much about education. They worry about their life at home. Which is food, mostly. (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

There are many issues within the RSIC community including furthering education for youth and adults, drugs, alcohol, suicide, and other unmet mental health needs. Deryn worked with the UNITY members to discuss and act on the realization that educating the community is critical to all of these issues, “For some of the things just focusing on educating individuals about the stigma behind those, are important things that I think about when it comes to having a health community” (Deryn, personal communication, January 31, 2019). The UNITY focus group members talked about how the focus group took the information on the issues, but then introduced the ideas and solution back to the larger group of UNITY members where they voted on it. Faith and Dalia, UNITY Board members along with the other focus group members, played critical roles as leaders in the
process. They mentor the young ones, but also provide space for others to step up into the process (personal communication, March 8, 2019).

The UNITY group chose to create a teen food pantry to address the needs of hunger. The pantry contains food and hygiene products specifically for teens. The UNITY members highlighted that education is critical to native youth. If they are hungry or thinking about where their next meal is coming from, they cannot focus on school. The local food pantry has food, but in order for teens to access those resources, they have to ask an adult or get permission. The UNITY teen food pantry gives access to teens directly, so they do not need to be embarrassed or worried about asking for help. The UNITY members, especially the president, noted how important this was to keep kids in school. The data below provides more detail on how the group used YPEM for implementing that project.

The pre- and post-intervention interviews, along with observational data, a reflection process by the researcher, and other supportive information documented the process. The process of implementing YPEM led to several themes that explore the youth empowerment process for UNITY group members and the youth mentor. The following sections elaborate these themes.

NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: Theme One

*A strong culture and a consciousness of self as connected to the tribal community supports native youth voice, fosters common purpose, and creates youth-led change.*

Their native cultural, consciousness of self, reframing a false public narrative and youth leadership were very important to the group. They are dealing with trauma passed down through generations and they need support from their community, positive mentors,
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and community members to help them through this trauma. The youth shared a recent experience at a basketball game.

Like last night, I had a basketball game against the rivals, Virginia City. They have a lot of hate and it's gone back for centuries towards us, and they, last night we had a comment that said we should just scalp them. Like that was to us, we were like, I wanted to say something but if I said something, they are going to say I was trying to fight them or something. (McKenna, personal communication, February 16, 2019).

When asked to clarify who said that to her, she explained, “This white kid with his father. His father was encouraging him to say it” (McKenna, personal communication, February 16, 2019). These types of incidents were part of their experience with school sporting events.

And if you say something like in previous years, it will just start up, it will like grow. Yeah. And it will pin it on us. Like it was our fault because we wanted to defend ourselves. Same exact thing happened when my mom went there too, like it happened...It's happened almost every year. Last year we had a fight too. (Dalia, personal communication, February 16, 2019).

The youth understood that there was a balance sought in protecting yourself while recognizing that knowledge is more important than hate. They talked about having parents with them and mentors from their school that were helping them be proud to be an Indian, that they do still exist, but also acknowledge that fighting with those students would not benefit anyone.

When talking about strategies in dealing with certain stereotypes or negative situations, the UNITY members saw the importance of recognizing their culture to educate, but not as a reason to continue hating each other. They all talked and shared a common view of the value of education for themselves and others. It was important to the youth not to make an argument, but rather to provide facts regarding the history of
Indian Country. There are individuals within the community that the youth saw as ignorant or unaware of colonialism and the history of what happened to their ancestors. Faith noted it was important for them to create space for, “educating them in the moment” (Faith, personal communication, February 16, 2019). Thalia agreed, “Yeah, where you're educating them in that sense, where you don't get mad. You just are emotionless and you're teaching them, to give them knowledge instead of hate” (Thalia, personal communication, February 16, 2019).

Deryn expressed the importance of leading by example, “the younger generation will eventually lead us” (Deryn, personal communication, January 31, 2019). The concept and traditional value of knowing your impact and purpose was further defined with the seven generations analogy.

When we talk about seven generations, when we talk about, everything that our ancestors have left behind, we need to have a purpose. So, if we know that purpose, at a young age, and the adults encourage us at young ages, then it can just be overall that whole intergenerational working together from top to bottom. (Deryn, personal communication, January 31, 2019)

Faith, UNITY President, talked about her purpose for being a leader, but also how UNITY was helping the youth to become leaders by being more welcoming, recognizing their common purpose, and respecting each other’s voice.

I think we're all just very welcoming now, because UNITY has helped a lot, like, with our voice also, because Thalia, she wouldn't talk to anybody. If we had done this when we first started, Thalia would just be like "Yeah, yeah." But now, she just like, she knows her voice is being heard and her voice counts. I think UNITY helped a lot with that for other students. (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

The youth also reflected on their recent trip to Fort Hall, which was a youth leadership summit. Other tribal youth surrounded them. This was important to their
process and Deryn felt it was critical to consider. These youth are recognizing who they are.

And that's another collaboration between our traditional values, core values, and our identity crisis that we have. That's huge, too. I didn't even mention identity crisis. Because if we don't know where we come from, how can we move forward? So, that's what we've been doing here, too. So, we have Pow Wow Clubbers, Eagle Wings, Hand Drummers, the male drum group. We have our Introduction to Paiute, Shoshone, Washoe. I mean, the (beading). Yes. Immersing them into the culture so that they know, "This is who you came from and this is what they wanted, and this is where we're going." Are we in touch with that? Are we off on that? Are we centered to that? What are we? So, it's been really good at the youth being able to sing their Great Basin songs, being able to do basic introductory, and coming back to the rest of the youth and saying, "This is what we want to do and this is what we should be doing. So, with opening prayers and having our songs, and not feeling embarrassed to do it, but to showcase it. (Deryn, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

Deryn frequently discussed the meaning of citizenship and community for the Reno Spark Indian Colony. “So, community, in my opinion, is not only these people that live within the vicinity that we are capturing, but also the departments and employees that help function within that community” (Deryn, personal communication, February 1, 2019). Deryn viewed the idea of citizenship as twofold: individuals are tribal members and citizens of Nevada. This includes their sovereignty and the governing body, but also, they have to abide by state and federal laws. “We’re citizens of the U.S.; we’re not separate” (Deryn, personal communication, February 1, 2019).

NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: Theme Two

*For UNITY participants, intergenerational collaboration recognized youth as having significant roles within the community through respect and confidence.*
The UNITY members recognized collaboration and partnerships with other community members as a part of their process. Faith shared steps the group took to gain approval, and secure the location of their project.

I'm pretty sure it was, part of the fire department, I think, I am not sure, but they ... I think Robin really played a big role in the communication part too. Because she asked if we could use the room, and they are like "Yeah, if they are going to be doing something like this, we want to help, we want to help you achieve your goals, so (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

The UNITY members talked about building up their level of respect within the community, building on this concept of intergenerational collaboration. McKenna talked about the importance of partnerships and collaboration within the community with adults.

The connections I see, was really with the business. Like with the council members and people that work on the colony. When we did our spaghetti sale, they kinda realized and started to ... Spaghetti Sale. Like a dinner. It was, it was pretty cool. They really started to talk to us more about how we have been helping them, and like you said, seeing us working. They are our main source too, because they help us with our technology and communication. They help us with our driving, our planning and they're like our backbone to as well (McKenna, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

Deryn noted this building of confidence was critical for youth. This confidence and intergenerational collaboration showed in UNITY members during the UNITY meeting. The members had two presenters from the community talking about gun violence but also peer court. The youth showed respect, and were learning the importance of listening to adults or community members in leadership positions and learning how to work collaboratively towards an issue (personal communication, February 7, 2019).
This level of intergenerational collaboration, partnerships, and resources continues beyond RSIC, too. This includes partnerships such as working with University of Nevada, Reno and Truckee Meadows Community College, two local higher education institutions.

Those are our prominent individuals that help us secure locations and give them the opportunity to come and visit the universities. You know, look at the courses that they have, and they embrace them too. They have Native American clubs within the universities that allow them to come in and shadow and see kind of what they do. And they also learn from our group as well and what we do within our community and our initiatives. And so, we do utilized a lot of the outside community but we also have a lot of internal departments that, that- like language and culture, and the recreation, tribal court system. (Deryn, personal communication, January 31, 2019)

Three members of UNITY participated in a youth panel at the Nevada Department of Education’s 12th Annual American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Education Summit in March 2019, which was held at Truckee Meadows Community College. Faith and Thalia where two members who shared their thoughts around equity for youth. After the session the researcher observed Thalia’s mother and other RSIC community members, including a very well-respected Paiute teacher from the local high school, congratulating the UNITY members. The teacher told them they were the most articulate of the panel and that their answers were well-spoken and well received by the audience (personal communication, March 21, 2019). This level of collaboration, respect, and support was very impactful on Faith and Thalia. At the next meeting, when we spoke, Faith was reflecting on her leadership.

It made me recognize, it made me a better leader and mentor. I have known since I've been a leader for my family and I'm just ... I've been the rock of my family. It just made me realize I could actually be a leader,
because I have a lot of people that look up to me, and they still encourage me to be a better leader, so. To think about what other people agree, or don't agree on. (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: Theme Three

*Through their efforts to create a food pantry, participants discovered that action is a strategy for acknowledging trauma and a catalyst for empathy and empowerment.*

They brainstormed the issues and knew that communication was critical to identifying the issue to work on; in order to function, they needed to communicate. They brainstormed ideas and they decided to develop a food pantry. McKenna described the decision-making process.

Well, a food pantry's good, but then we thought about how adults can go out and do that themselves. It's hard getting food, when you are in a tough situation, but we thought about the youth and how harsh it is for them and how it impacts them more so, so we put just a teen pantry instead. (McKenna, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

The group identified the food pantry as a problem connected to needs within the community related to parenting and education.

We thought about what our problems were first, and the most problem that usually comes up, is education. A lot of kids don't worry much about education; they worry about their life at home. Which is food, mostly. I was one of those kids that would always worry about food and not have my head all straight into school, and I would be like, ‘Oh well I'm just going to eat at school, because I get free lunch.’ But not every kid gets free lunch because we don't know their situation. So, we wanted kids to focus more on school, rather than where their next meal would come from. And, for them to trust us and some kids usually would rather talk to a peer about their problems, rather than an adult. I guess you could say it's easier. (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

She shared her personal experience, and, in that moment, all the UNITY members agreed and nodded their heads and saw this food pantry as a gateway to helping youth focus on their education. They noted that Native Americans have the lowest percentage
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

of students graduating, so they are truly trying to help kids stay in school and graduate. They had empathy for other youth in the community. They did not want them to have to worry about needing food. They also gathered some hygiene products, again, because of the specific needs of teens in the community.

You know like, my parents like, my mom she wasn't, she wasn't motivated to go to school because she didn't, she only had her mom there. And she didn't have anybody else to motivate her only went up to 3rd grade. And that's all she doesn't even know math or anything. So, she really can't help me. And my dad he only graduated from high school. And he didn't have any motivation either. So, I think that's kind of like, it's like a cycle, in my communities and families. So that's why a lot of kids now, like my age like 18 and so on. They don't go to college. They're just like, out on the streets, trying to make a living. And it's harder for them to make a living because they either don't graduate high school or they just after high school they're just done. (Faith, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

The group noted that lack of education within the community is an issue created through the trauma because of the history of boarding schools and acculturation.

It's cultural trauma you know and it's from boarding schools and it's the way that they were taught from there, and we are still trying to get over that. And you know what I mean, it is still really, recent in this area that we have had a boarding school, really recently like you know what I mean, that history of the United States is not being checked out or out of touch. (Jonah, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

Education has trauma associated with it and in order to move through that trauma, the tribal community continues to identify strategies. For example, the UNITY members are connecting to their peers in education and mentoring. The UNITY program mainly focuses on high school but does have some college members. They are able to work together on “the social aspect, the justice aspect; they're very prominent in every issue when it comes to Native Country” (Deryn, personal communication, January 31, 2019).

Another strategy includes putting UNITY members into regular roles within the ten
standing committees for the RSIC. These include the committees that review decisions for housing, for our law and order code, for Education Advisory Board, and for Executive Health Board. Deryn explained the goal.

Putting the youth at the table allows them to not only learn, but listen, hear, and to start to voice their opinions. And so that's something new, we're just, just going to start in February so that their roles are very, very important (Deryn, personal communication, January 31, 2019).

The role of youth in speaking out, being heard, engaged, and empowered in the community is vital according to the youth mentor. They have worked through all of these opportunities just in the last year.

The youth however still encounter trauma within their classrooms within the formal education setting.

I remember an AP assignment. [The teacher] wanted students to go and observe a specific location, you know what I mean. As, I don't know how to put into words for me. And they are from outsiders’ point of view of course it's going to be what they observe and what, they're going to observe is negative, but it is not really like that. (Jonah, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

Youth generally spoke of feeling singled out and felt that people outside of the community looked upon the reservation through a negative lens.

There was this other student who wanted to interview me because I was native, and she said ‘I want to interview you because I have this assignment about what the environment at a reservation is like, like how does it look’. Then they were like encouraged to take pictures of it and describe how they felt while they were there. (Thalia, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

Another member shared an experience at a local school.

When I first came like [to Community College], I had a history class and the guy who was teaching Nevada history. He was trying to tell the students how Paiutes and Native people were, but he was only teaching it from the book, he doesn't know the whole story. So I don't know why he's
teaching Paiutes, Paiute history and Shoshone history. He would ask me questions and kind of like point me out, I wouldn't say much because, like he would try to talk about culture songs and all this, and people on the outside don't really need to know [the cultural songs]. If they want to know the history, then I will tell them, not just the good side of the history, but our bad side. He was only talking about the good side and the traveling. He did say people were dying and being moved to these places because the colonizers were making us go to the reservations. (The truth was), We couldn't have anything. We had no water or anything close to us. (Faith, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

They continued to share these types of stories, but they also talked about education, motivation, and having a plan to inform people within the community. The UNITY members are identifying the trauma but building space for healing; they understood the importance of empathy. “I'm pretty sure because we've all had a situation, where you know, it was necessary, or assistance was necessary in some type of way” (Jonah, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

The forming of the UNITY group and developing the teen food pantry did provide them with a process to take the trauma and respond by being the catalyst for change. Faith reflected on her positive experience with YPEM process.

I think we all did a great job, especially the younger ones, they didn't know we were doing this for a while. But once we mentioned it, then they were just like "Oh, okay, we want to help people." They want to, They are understanding more. (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

Thalia also reflected on her growth during the process of building the food pantry.

It just makes you want to better yourself as a person, so it’s like getting stronger and further outreach to other people. It makes you want to connect and be a better person. (personal communication, March 23, 2019)

This growth during the process, showed how the youth used the trauma to move into a process of supporting their teen peers, by developing the food pantry.
NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: Theme Four

*The UNITY members recognized that peer to peer collaboration and well-informed community members enhanced buy-in for change.*

Deryn noted that her role was to support the process, to promote communication between the mentors, to set a positive example, and to take steps to keep partisan politics out of the meetings and activities (UNITY Inc., 2017). These roles are noted in the handbook, but also served as points of reflection:

We give them their space, and that is to make that decision yes or no. I wish, I wish I could force some of the outcome. There are sometimes when I don't feel that they made the right choice, but you know it's their decision (Deryn, personal communication, January 31, 2019).

Throughout YPEM the UNITY members continued to discuss communication. This includes the importance of face-to-face communication, to needing communication to function properly, and recognizing that not everyone is comfortable communicating the same way. During the post-intervention interview, they used the term communication in the same vein as teamwork. They also noted how important communication was to the success of the project. Deryn also noted that teamwork, communication, and mentoring between the UNITY members were so critical to the YPEM process.

Our group leaders within the group, I think that by sitting in a group setting they started to witness another person's actions or why they do what they do. And so, it's not really that they're putting each other down or they're doing things, not listening to them. They really do have, not so much compassion, for the individual, but they can relate, probably have some empathy. They may not be in their shoes and so they don't know exactly how they feel, but when they come to a group setting and they hear it they can emotionally connect with them. So, no matter if it's a 13-year-old teaching an 18-year-old a little bit about this is why I come to lead because it's not always just the older group that's teaching. It's the younger group teaching the older group something they've forgotten to. I was 13 at the time. I'm now 18 and I remember that point. And so, the group setting to empower each other by listening to them and taking that into effect. And also debriefing after their group sessions because
(reflection) They go home, and they think about it. They sit in the vans when we're transporting and say, "Oh, I understand now why this was said or why this was done." And so, they each build off one another and they can connect with everything that's happening whether it's happening personally or to somebody else. And going home more satisfied. I feel better that I'm going to a good home life. (Deryn, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

The communication theme also included discussion on how important understanding perspectives is to the process.

During the, like when we were brainstorming, when I would bring up ideas to the table and everyone else agreed, it felt like, we were all on the same page. Usually when I speak, I'll be pass by and then people wouldn't really credit they would just build off of it, without thinking of anyone else who helped them with that idea. Yeah, so then people would trace back to what I said, and then they would build off of that by ... And we would all just partake in this idea. And it all felt that we were a good group to work with together, like we were really compatible. (Thalia, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

The UNITY members really harnessed their communication skills during YPEM. Deryn has strong skills in communication and connecting with people and building those relationships, but she works with the youth to build their skill sets. “Like we all help to plan the meetings, but Deryn will be the one to set the date. With her organization and communication skills, she'll help us all do it together” (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019). Faith continued, “We're all helping to do this one thing, but she keeps us on track to do it” (personal communication, March 23, 2019). They confirmed that having a youth mentor with communication skills is critical as well.
NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: Theme Five

Parallel engagement at the local level (through YPEM implementation) and national level (through participation in national meetings, symposiums, and summits in Washington DC) facilitated youth empowerment.

During the research process, the UNITY members had three important events that built on their cultural and self-identity and increased their confidence in recognizing their voice. In February, some members traveled to Washington, D.C. for the National Congress of American Indians Tribal Nations Policy Summit, 116th Congress Executive Council, which was also happening during the National Indian Education Association’s Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations Priorities. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has a youth agenda for their winter session.

The Youth Agenda’s intended audience is for high school and college students ages 16-23 with an interest in political science, tribal government, and Native American legislative and governmental affairs. The NCAI Youth Commission—which includes all interested youth as well as elected officers—provides a unique perspective on issues relevant to tribal youth. It is an opportunity to acquire knowledge from—and be a resource to—NCAI and Tribal Leaders about the organizational processes of NCAI, and structure of Tribal politics. (National Congress of American Indians [NCAI], 2019).

The youth participated in all of these events because of Deryn’s insuring they had the tools to get there, participate, and reflect. This is important to note because the youth noted how this conference influenced them. When reflecting on their process and their own journey, Faith noted:

I think this process; it can help a lot of other students. We went to this DC trip and this girl from Alaska didn't know like how to do things; she didn't have resources like Deryn. She has people, and elders, but elders don't know technology and they don't have mentors like Deryn's age they just have older ones, because she said at a certain age, you don't get to do certain things in their community. This process will help a lot with people that don't have the resources, or steps in their head for planning their goals. (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019)
Through the process they saw the importance of Deryn and how she supported their voice, “Yeah, because that girl, she had a mentor, but it was more an advisor, like a person there, to watch her” (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019). Some of the members also spoke on a panel at the Indian Education Summit. During this summit, they were answering questions on equity for youth. They talked about their project and the process that they went through in front of a group of over 100 people with various backgrounds in education. Prompted by audience questions around equity for youth, this presentation provided them an opportunity for reflection on the process. They were able to use these types of professional development opportunities to recognize their voice but also to build in more reflection on process.

They felt like they had all grown through the process. The UNITY group includes youth from the RSIC, but Deryn also pushed the RSIC to include the tribal youth in the local urban area to be included in their UNITY group. This helped the RSIC members build their own identities but also help UNITY members as a whole help each other. The youth noted that this process allowed them to feel that they had truly implemented something to help and change the community.

In the beginning, the UNITY members identified education as an issue along with parental involvement. What could they do to address this critical, overarching issue? They understood how important community was and is to the process,

Because without the community we wouldn't be able to do any of the things that we are doing. You know what I am saying. Cause actually the way we get our funding and things, like that, is participating in community activities. And then community observes and sees what we're doing and then they'll reward us, or whatever. Or our energy and stuff like that. They are basically supporting us to watch us grow, so then we can actually support them. (Jonah, personal communication, March 23, 2019)
NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: YPEM Strategies

During the research period many strategies emerged as imperative for the growth and empowerment of this group. Table 4 contains those key strategies.

Table 4

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Faith noted when asked about the location of their project and how they were able to get the space approved, “I'm pretty sure it was, part of the fire department, I think, I am not sure, but they ... I think Robin really played a big role in the communication part too. Because she asked if we could use the room, and they are like &quot;Yeah, if they are going to be doing something like this, we want to help, we want to help you achieve your goals, so” (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019). Communication is definitely a big thing. Because when we need to function properly, we need to communicate. (Jonah, personal communication, March 23, 2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
<td>The UNITY members started their meetings with an in Paiute, Shoshone or Washoe. They also read a prayer aloud during a meeting. The importance to bring in their cultural in, If you know your culture, you have confidence to help other. During the education summit, UNITY members participated in traditional song and dance in the beginning as a part of a traditional opening ceremony (personal communication, March 21, 2019). The UNITY members multiple times talked about beading for their sets. There was instances that they were beading in the moment. This including during UNITY meetings, interviews, and even at the summit (personal communication, February 7 March 21, March 23, 2019).</td>
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Intergenerational Collaboration

At the beginning, it was a little bit of a pushback. A lot of the adults don't see the youth as valued as they should be so they're very protected. They feel as though if they know all the information and they're the ones doing it then they hold all the power versus if we share with the youth everything, we want to accomplish it's that, we're a greater power. We can run forward, work together, and allow them to gain knowledge within their communities. By gaining knowledge it's gaining power, so sometimes they feel as though if we teach them then we don't rely on them. We're talking away their personal space, they're personal power, but in the end then seeing them do the things that want to do and also see them helping accomplish their goals as well. So, it was a pushback at the beginning. Again, UNITY’s a student run program so they can actually make their decisions on their own. They did not really need the community to support them right away. And so, we gained their trust and gained a lot more of their input and then gave them more value to the UNITY running and functioning. They are here to help not to hinder any of the projects that are being brought forth by the tribe (Deryn, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

After the UNITY members spoke at the education summit, they were greeted by elders and other community members that told them they did a great job. This included providing opportunities for them to speak to other youth and continue to grow (personal communication, March 21, 2019).

Reflection and Showcasing Positive Actions

And also debriefing after their group sessions because, they go home, and they think about it. They sit in the vans when we're transporting and say, "Oh, I understand now why this was said or why this was done." And so, they each build off one another and they can connect with everything that's happening whether it's happening personally or to somebody else. And going home more satisfied. I feel better that I'm going to a good home life. And I know they're not, so I'm going to try to help them I that way. It's challenging because the native kids they like to joke. They like sarcasm. They like to say things to each other that sometimes we would consider hurtful, but they're not doing it in a hurtful matter (Deryn, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

Dalia explained how she and her mom work with the community to sponsor a essay contest to get youth to think about issues within their community, “I have a princess title
every year and as a princess I have a little-bit more of a platform to do stuff. It makes me comfortable doing stuff, so I hold essay contests in the community to try to get youth to think about the issues, but I don’t really know the next step to take.” (personal communication, February 16, 2019)

**Having a Safe Welcoming Space**

Because we started out in a library in a small little nook. At one point, I could probably send you a photo of this little tiny space, you can basically touch wall to wall with maybe even bend your elbows before you ... and touch the wall. And then in the library, only being able to hold maybe 11, at the most, 15. We outgrew that space. So, then the collaboration between the tribe and this building, and it not being utilized. (Deryn, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

The UNITY members were relaxing in the area that was considered specifically for them. This includes having blankets and lounging on the couch, having a fire in the fireplace, beading, and eating snacks. They were very relaxed and welcomed the researcher into this space (personal communication, March 23, 2019).

**Building in Room for Adversity**

Deryn talked about building in space for adversity, and recognition that not all processes are perfect.

One of the important strategies that was noted as a space for improvement in YPEM was the process of failure.

“Because even with the best program, even with the best framework, you're gonna have those that cannot cope. So, even putting it in front of them is gonna be very difficult for them to be prominent citizens, to make changes, to be leaders, to stand out in the crowd. And that's okay. They don't always have to. But if they can cope with everything that's happening, have good coping mechanisms, good skills, it'll help them even more, even if they're shy and quiet and want to stay in the background like some of them do. So, that's kind of like I look at a framework of a project and it says, "Oh, do XY and Z and this is gonna be your outcome," but sometimes it doesn't say, "But if we throw in Y between A and B, here's another step that you can take to get out of it," because that's the reality. It's not all streamlined and it getting come out perfect” (Deryn, personal communication, March 23, 2019).
The following section provides an overview of the YPEM and general reflections. There were three overarching themes noted in this section: adversity, teamwork, and transformation.

When asked about the process, the youth saw YPEM as a cycle. Thalia said, “It's like, almost like a reference, almost like a formula that we all follow” (Thalia, personal communication, March 23, 2019). She continued to reflect that this process helped her to understand how to recognize a problem and move forward.

Before, it would be like, it felt like there was a lot of steps to do it. It felt like a big project that needed a lot of work. Yeah, it felt like. This is bigger than what you can actually do, but then actually doing it with a group of people, that understand, it makes it seem a lot easier. (Thalia, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

Faith is the President of the UNITY group and she was a big part of moving the project forward. She also thought YPEM helped the UNITY group advance its mission.

But now, it's like we have more of an understanding of how and why, and where and when, and how long our for us to reach out goal. So, I guess now we have the steps on how to do it, and how to reach our goal (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

Deryn provided feedback on the process of Faith mentoring the other members and helping the process to move forward. The youth mentor was important, but it is also important to note the peer to peer mentoring within the process. “I think it all comes back to teamwork. Because Faith, and all of us we all have each other. Whereas, that individual, she was on her own trying to just form a group. So, we're just fortunate enough to have each other” (Dalia, personal communication, March 23, 2019). This reflection on individuals as members of groups and the larger community directly connects to the SCM (HERI, 1996).
Deryn talked about building in space for adversity and recognizing that not all processes are perfect. The UNITY members talked about not feeling like they were totally done. This ties into Deryn’s ideas about the value of failing safely. The process needs to build in opportunities for youth to fail safely. She also realized that, even though the UNITY group was starting at Stage 3, every time a group takes on a new project, they might have to start back at the beginning to arrive at that common purpose. The UNITY members had a strong youth mentor and strong UNITY youth leadership. When reflecting on this process, they realized they had created a support system for each other.

I told her, "We all have each other’s numbers and stuff. In the paper that we all got. I told her that, 'if you need help, don't hesitate to ask', or cause the other kids in our group, was at the conference are also a part of a UNITY group, so they know the process of how to do it. So, I just told her, don't be scared to ask anybody. Don't be ashamed, you feel like you can't do it, but just ask somebody (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

During the final interview, the researcher asked if they changed through the process. Youth studied a diagram of YPEM and were asked to reflect on the process. Jonah had just come back from a UNITY trip to a youth leadership summit and a visit to a tribal college. Jonah articulated his growth when asked if he was the same person after the project.

No, most definitely not. I've definitely grown, I understand a lot more different things, my point of views have changed. I want to be the change now. Because honestly, I have always had some context of goals, but not being a part of something that can actually make an actual difference in positive way, too. No matter what, it's something that I think is great and, it's something that I think I want to be a part of forever. Cause, I know it's going to help me grow and other people grow. (Jonah, personal communication, March 23, 2019)
Dalia also attended the conference in Idaho and she thought the trips along with the YPEM process helped her. She also noted that she had changed.

Well, it came from this experience, but also the conference in Idaho that we went to. They talked a lot about leadership. So that relates to this, 'cause they were saying that ... They were talking about Apache ways and everything. And I am Apache so, talking about how leaders, they don't come first, they put everyone else before themselves. Then, in this experience that really shows, because that's what we are trying to do. (Dalia, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

This reflection and change are important because she talked about being Apache, and how that identity was part of her growth. Dalia and Faith are officers in the group and they both provided feedback on their individual selves and how they fit into the community.

You know I think it, made me recognize, it made me like, a better leader. And mentor, because I have known since I've been a leader for my family and I'm just ... I've been the rock of my family, I guess. It just made me realize, I could actually be a leader, because I have a lot of people that look up to me. And it made me appreciate that people are watching me, and still are. And they still encourage me to be a better leader, so. I think this experience made me a better leader and selfless, a little bit more. To think about what other people agree, or don't agree on. (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019)

They saw that this process pushed them to “build myself up because of this experiences” and “wanting to do more” (Thalia, personal communication, March 23, 2019) and to be “more selfless” (McKenna, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

The YPEM process overall affected the UNITY members as well as the community because of the new teen pantry. Deryn thought that this opportunity gave the youth an experience that they could reflect on while also supporting others. They realized that the more that they knew themselves – had congruence and consciousness of self– the more that they could collaborate and communicate with others. In the end, they
implemented change by finding the power of their voice, mentoring and communicating with each other, and empathizing with the community of which they are a part. They are learning that they are at a point in their life where you're teaching other youth how to recognize their voice, how to engage and, in the end, how to empower each other.

It just felt like kinda come from an individual, and then working with another person. Just understanding and knowing how to work with them, and that really what we are kinda learning in or with this type of thing. We got a voice for a reason. (Jonah, personal communication, March 23, 2019)
CASE STUDY THREE: JOVENES DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a) a community heritage, or b) social justice need among a variety of demographic groups across the United States. This sector was one of undocumented, immigrant youth living in the Greater New Orleans area.

JOVENES DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL: Participants and Process

The Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans was a youth group formed for the purpose of this study due to the lack of interest in participation from already established youth organizations in the Greater New Orleans area. In November 2018, an advertisement was sent out via social media and electronic mail to local schools and non-profit organizations expressing the need for youth to participate in this study, detailing the benefits that would arise from participation and from the study’s findings. Eight youth and parents expressed initial interest in participating in this study, and by the first meeting, six youth committed to engaging in the work involved in this study for the following several months.

The youth group Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans was made up of five undocumented, Latinx youth that attended local public schools in the Greater New Orleans area. The participants ranged in age from 13 to 18 and were first-generation residents of the United States. All of their parents immigrated to the Greater New Orleans area from Latin American countries, specifically Mexico and Honduras, within the last one to ten years. Four of the six youth were fully Limited English Proficient
(LEP), meaning that their levels of understanding and speaking the English language were minimal. As a result, most of the interviews and meetings were held in Spanish and documents were translated into English. Two of the six youth had been residents of the United States for a greater portion of their lives; therefore, their comprehension of and communication in the English language was considered proficient.

Given the rapid shift in demographics in New Orleans, and Louisiana as a whole, the researcher intentionally recruited random samples of undocumented and/or Limited English Proficient (LEP) youth from local public schools. While there were a variety of local organizations tackling youth engagement work with minority populations in the Greater New Orleans area, none of the youth had previously engaged in an outside community-based organization or project prior to this study. Due to immigration statuses, many youth and families expressed concerns regarding confidentiality and safety of youth, and this was an underlying reason for this youth group’s lack of participation in prior community-based initiatives.

Due to the uniqueness of this case study, the researcher also assumed the role of participant throughout the study. Due to a lack of interest in participation from already formed youth organizations in the region, the researcher took on the role of youth mentor, an instrumental position in the implementation process of the YPEM. Further, assuming this role was a particularly unique experience given the researcher’s own background as a formal and informal educator in the Greater New Orleans area. As such, a co-researcher conducted participant interviews to strengthen the study’s validity.

The researcher, who became the group’s mentor, was a first-generation New Orleanian, born to immigrant Nicaraguan parents. He attended local New Orleans Public
Schools as an English as a Second Language (ESL) student until the age of 10. He continued his educational career in New Orleans in regular education classrooms despite the need for continuous language support for himself and a need for language access (to educational issues) for his family. At the age of 16, he dropped out of school, attended community college, and began his career in formal and informal education. He previously served as a student support specialist at a local college, assisting many first-generation college students through the admissions, enrollment and advising processes. He later participated in community-based youth engagement work with a local non-profit, developing leadership seminars and community organizing opportunities for young peoples, ages 12-18, surrounding issues directly affecting immigrant, Latinx, and undocumented populations in the Greater New Orleans region. The group’s mentor eventually became a formal educator, serving as a teacher, instructional coach, and assistant principal, and he is currently a principal in the local school district. It is evident that his ties to the community are deeply rooted in supporting vulnerable populations of young people and their families.

In April 2018, the researcher initially communicated with a local non-profit organization regarding their interest in participating in this doctoral study. The organization was a youth-based, youth-led non-profit that had been engaging in youth participatory action research (YPAR) addressing the areas of immigration, LGBTQ+ experiences, reproduction justice, and food justice since 2007. Initially, the researcher received approval from the organization’s executive director to work with youth on the implementation of YPEM, effective August 2018. During the time of initial communication, the researcher was living in another country; therefore, all
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communication had been conducted via email and social media platforms. When the researcher relocated to the Greater New Orleans area, he was unsuccessful in contacting the executive director of the initial youth organization. After several months of unsuccessful communication efforts, the researcher began reaching out to other local youth-based organizations.

In September 2018, the researcher communicated with a Latinx-focused youth organization to determine their interest in this doctoral study. Upon initial contact, one of the organization’s leaders quickly declined the offer, despite the thorough information that was provided regarding the benefits of this study and the impact the findings could potentially have in the arena of youth development and engagement. After promoting the project using social media and, with the assistance of a local community organizer, by December 2018, the researcher had six youth and families fully-devoted to engaging in this process due to the potential benefits this study could bring to the field of youth engagement and because of the guarantee of no risks associated with participation. The six youth, along with the researcher/mentor, determined the name of this particular group, which, for the purpose of this study, would be called Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans (translated to “Social Justice Youth of New Orleans”).

During the pre-intervention interview, the mentor was asked a variety of reflection questions that varied in depth and on topics ranging from issues of citizenship, to the personal meanings of community, to the idea of youth as community change agents. Based on the data collected, it is evident that the mentor saw a strong connection between collaboration and community to effect change. The mentor looked at community as being two things. First, a physical space. An example of this could be the
neighborhood one lives in. He also defined community as a value rather than a physical space or being. The second meaning of community for the mentor focused on “being a part of something or a sense of belonging” (Mentor, personal communication, 2019). One can demonstrate “community” as a value by “treating people like family, with dignity, and respect” (Mentor, personal communication, 2019).

It was evident that the mentor had deep roots in his local communities. He outlined the communities he was a part of as being more than one community. First, there is the city and neighborhood in which he was engaged. Then, there was his work community. Through the initial interview, the mentor elaborated on the local, physical community that he lived in and how this impacted his own collaboration and creation of common goals with local citizens in order to create change. The ideas of advocating for and collaborating with people were strong throughout the interview, noting that:

My community itself consists of primarily African American individuals, low income to middle class depending on the block that you live in. And it just varies. I live in a community that consists of a lot of people who are constantly wanting to advocate for themselves and their needs and for the needs of others. So, I think those two things describe the community that I live in. (Mentor, personal communication, 2019).

The mentor was a native of the New Orleans area; therefore, he felt as though a large part of himself was rooted in the local New Orleans community. During the interview, the idea of commitment to community was highly salient for the mentor. As such, he expressed a high level of commitment, whether intrinsic or not, to collaborating with members of his community in order to make it a more prosperous place to live and work. Much of the commitment that he felt stemmed from his own experiences living in a poorer area of New Orleans and because of witnessing, “systemic and cultural
inequities that perpetuated in the community” (Mentor, personal communication, 2019).
When asked about issues that were important to him, the mentor’s responses clearly were rooted in the ideas of commitment, community, collaboration, and change, all of which emerged 26 times at one point or another throughout the interview. Issues that were important to him were related to social, cultural, and systemic issues that affected the community in which he lived and worked. He discussed issues rooted in neighborhood needs, including blight and road disrepair, to greater issues affecting people across the United States of America, including racial tensions, immigration, and education inequities.

When asked about his motivation for working with youth, the themes of commitment, empowerment, and change emerged vividly. Given his role in the community, and as a native of New Orleans, he expressed that his motivation was very personal and rooted in his experiences having grown up in what he called a broken system of continuous systemic inequities. As such, the mentor expressed that many of the things he witnessed growing up were the catalysts for the work he did with youth.

When asked about ways in which strong adult leaders can empower youth, the mentor used his experiences in the non-profit sector to guide his responses. He expressed the need for adults to take a step back and listen to young people, their needs, their wants and the ways in which they believe change can occur in their own communities. The idea of taking a step back and listening was mentioned a variety of times in the interview, particularly because the mentor discussed the tendency of adults wanting to solve problems that are directly impacting young people, rather than including youth in finding solutions.
The most important thing that leaders can do, or mentors can do to support youth is listen. I know that probably sounds silly but we're often, as adults, wanting to have the solutions or wanting to find the solution for things that are affecting young people, but listening to young people and their problems and listening to the way that they think they can solve them is super crucial to the youth development work (Mentor, personal communication, 2019).

When discussing youth empowerment, the mentor thought of the term as the impact of some kind of work. An example he provided was working with undocumented youth who were looking to tackle a specific issue that was directly affecting them and their communities, allowing them to take the lead in some sort of campaign, and allowing them to revel in the successes (or failures) that might arise from such a thing. He expressed that the empowerment piece was a feeling that youth gained as a result of those successes and failures. This empowerment then allowed them to take a step back, reflect, plan, and act again, depending on results. The mentor once again expressed the need for adults to step back, listen, and allow youth to lead the dialogue in issues that were most important to them.

Aside from being a formal educator, the mentor was a community activist who focused on needs pertaining to immigrants and undocumented residents living in New Orleans. As such, he expressed that there were many obstacles faced by those he worked alongside, particularly when it came to their immigration status. He added that many of the youth that he was engaging with had been kept in detention centers in the past, which, as a result, created emotional and developmental trauma that impacted the ways in which they interacted with others. In addition, he discussed that many of them were asylum seekers due to political unrest in their own countries, and this added obstacles due to the additional layer of emotional trauma that is rooted in situations like these.
Partnerships were of high importance to the mentor. This was evident in the continuous emergence of collaboration and community themes that resonated throughout the interview process. Given the mentor’s activism, he was deeply connected to local organizations in New Orleans that partook in a lot of youth development and engagement work. The mentor mentioned one organization that focused its work on supporting the Latinx community, one organization whose work was engaging with the local Vietnamese population, another one which engaged with parents of incarcerated children, and one that worked toward providing restorative approaches to the juvenile justice system in New Orleans. One of the things that all of these organizations had in common was that they belonged to the Youth Coalition. Through this coalition, youth from each of the organizations came together once a month to discuss the different topics and projects they were tackling and to brainstorm ways in which they could support each other’s work, no matter how similar or different those projects were. The mentor expressed that, while the Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans was a group created by a random sample of youth for the purpose of this study, he envisioned them becoming a part of the Youth Coalition in order to cultivate relationships with youth that were both similar to and different from themselves. He further elaborated that this would be a great opportunity, post research study, for the youth to further strengthen their leadership skills through the power of connection within the vast variety of youth work that was being done in the region.

When asked about ways in which adult mentors could build confidence in youth to create greater change, the themes of collaboration and community once again became evident in his responses. Given the vulnerable population, he expressed the need for
there to be a strong level of trust between youth and adults, youth and youth, and youth and the processes in which they would be engaging.

I'm working with undocumented youth and I'm working with undocumented populations, and they're almost always on high alert, you know? And they almost always feel like they need to fight back for some reason. And so, I want to make sure that they understand that that's not what they need to do with me and that I'm here to support them in whatever way possible (Mentor, personal communication, 2019).

In addition, the mentor expressed the need for adults to support youth in building strong communication skills in order for them to be able to fully use their voices when advocating for issues that were important to them. Finally, the mentor mentioned that there was a high need for adults to use a culturally competent lens in their work to ensure that confidence was being fully cultivated in youth. He related this back to the idea of trust and collaboration, and how these things eventually help to create stronger communities.

The mentor believed that youth could play a crucial role in decision-making processes in his community. Specifically, he believed that youth should have a voice at every table that involved issues that affect them. He expressed frustration in local elected leaders who were working to create legislation that impacted young people without bringing those same youth to the table to ensure that the decisions being made were the appropriate ones. From his experiences, he noticed that adult advisors were often brought to the table to support youth legislation, but he noticed that the missing piece in this process was the engagement of youth at that same table.

So, when the mayor is taking office, she or he makes committees where they look for advisers for specific issues. So, for example, there's a Health and Human Services Committee. That committee is made up of doctors and people who work in human services. Let's think of, you know, committees that have to deal with youth. Hardly are youth ever involved
in these committees. We choose educators or we choose nonprofit leaders working with youth. So, I think the youth that I'm working with could potentially fill these gaps that we're seeing in leadership opportunities and roles in the city (Mentor, personal communication, 2019).

It was evident throughout the interview that the mentor believed deeply that youth could be catalysts for change in their communities when provided with the tools and opportunities to take the lead in creating change. He expressed that he had witnessed a specific youth group in the past that had influenced local change in schools based on their campaigns and community organizing. Specifically, this youth group worked to challenge disciplinary practices in New Orleans schools that they believed were expanding the school-to-prison-pipeline. The youth group created a campaign that engaged multiple stakeholders, which resulted in the Orleans Parish School Board shifting disciplinary procedures. As such, the mentor was confident that when youth were provided with the space, tools to confront controversy and the voice to take the lead in issues that affect them, meaningful change could occur.

The initial youth pre-intervention interview took place on December 21, 2018. The participants were initially hesitant to engage in the questions and were afraid to answer things “incorrectly.” There were numerous times throughout the interview that the researcher had to remind participants that there were no right or wrong answers, and that whatever they expressed would be beneficial to the study. Participants took their time in answering questions, often looking at each other for responses. As such, the researcher had to use probing questions in order to get participants to engage more fully. By the end of the initial interview, the youth participants demonstrated a stronger sense of understanding of potential issues of importance related to community heritage and social justice.
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Over the following months, the Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans group met a total of five times to work on YPEM strategies and to unpack the issues that were important to them. Youth established concrete norms for collaborating with one another, for communicating, and for respecting each other’s stories. The following four meetings consisted of trust and relationship building, determining key issues of importance to tackle and organize around, conversations about cultural competence, and conducting research on key issues.

Growth was evident within the mindsets of youth from the initial interview held in December 2018 to the time they participated in the post-intervention interviews in March 2019. Initially, youth provided some surface level responses that did not look beyond immediate personal gratification or satisfaction. While not fully implemented, the use of the YPEM helped youth become more cognizant of issues happening in the world around them and made them aware of the role that they could play in creating change.

The three-step process of a pre-interview, intervention implementation and post-interview created the emergence of common themes at every stage. Consciousness of self, commitment, congruence, common purpose, collaboration, citizenship, and change were each a thread in the fabric of the process – some stronger than others. There was variance in the depth of the themes, dependent upon the stages in which they emerged, and it was evident that, by the time youth engaged in the post-interview, a much more thorough understanding of youth voice, awareness of self, and knowledge of social issues had been established. Because of this study, four essential themes emerged.
JOVENES DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL: Theme One

*Vulnerability, relatability, and relevance created a basis for authentic engagement and grounded YPEM in issues that mattered to youth participants.*

From the very beginning, it was evident that youth saw this as an opportunity to unpack community issues that were affecting them and their families directly. Initially, youth were discussing surface level issues, like cafeteria food, but once Karen and Edgar began discussing social justice and community heritage issues, the tone of the conversations became more serious. The researcher regularly encouraged youth to think of personal experiences (familial or community) that they deemed important. To create a stronger sense of trust from the very beginning, the researcher shared a personal narrative about his schooling experiences that led him to dropping out. This created the opportunity for meaningful, open conversations about issues youth had experienced, despite them labeling him as an “Americanized Latino,” given the differences between his own experiences and those of the youth.

Karen once mentioned experiencing racism in her school. While she was mostly fluent in the English language, she felt as though she was inferior in comparison to those around her. She expressed that other students called her names. In addition, in the past, teachers would automatically assume she possessed lower intellectual capacity and would provide her with lower level assignments, rather than challenging her to think critically about topics. Amanda shared similar instances. She could relate to what Karen experienced in school. Amanda mentioned that her ESL teachers were the only ones to support her through emotionally hard times.

When asked what community-based issues were important to them, Karen and Edgar mentioned two pertinent social issues being experienced in modern-day America.
Karen discussed “that fucking wall, bro,” (Karen, personal communication, December 2018), referring to the wall that President Donald Trump wanted to build as a means to keep immigrants out of the United States.

President Trump is creating a wall. He wants a wall, actually. To cover the border of Mexico, and, like, it's unfair especially like when the other country doesn't really like the idea. And, it's not fair because part of the border is in Mexico's area, you know? That's pretty much taking their spot without permission, you know? (Karen, personal communication, December 2018).

Karen continued to discuss how this wall would be a bad idea because it was essentially telling the world that the United States did not welcome anyone to the country. The other youth agreed, and many referred to it as a “keep out!” sign or symbol of discrimination.

People discriminate [against] Hispanic people just because they come from different countries. Just because they say that they aren't from here. And that this is their country. And, like, they use violence, or, they offend people with words, and, they take it to the next level. Where, like, sometimes they actually do put their hands, they violate a certain line just because they say they are not from here (Karen, personal communication, December 2018).

Amanda shared that she felt bad for immigrants because it was often difficult for them to find jobs without the proper documentation, and this had an impact on their quality of life.

There is a problem with the situation of Americans against everyone. Of racists. That there are people who are racists who do not give the opportunity for immigrants to work in this country. As sometimes in schools there is also a mom or dad who can look at a child of another color who sometimes look at him as a racist. (Amanda, personal communication, December 2018).

When told to explain her response, Amanda mentioned that grown-ups perpetuated racism, and when there are adults who show their racist tendencies in front of children, kids are bound to adopt similar tendencies. She added that this was important to her
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“because there is so much violence, and that sometimes it is because of the color of a person” (Amanda, personal communication, December 2018). Many youth agreed that this was a cause for inferiority when in school, and this mentality arose in the pre-interview and through the intervention processes as well.

Edgar discussed the caravans from Honduras filled with asylum seekers looking to escape the political unrest currently seen in many Latin American countries.

What’s happening now in Honduras with the caravans that come from Honduras. They just happened, some are already here, almost near the United States border. Some people have already entered, several were children. Several children died in immigration because they did not want to let them in. I know that Trump is not to blame but it is not their fault either. Already several children have died for allegedly being dehydrated or because they are malnourished because they are not eating well. I’m from there and I would not like that to happen with some family member of mine or something like that. They also do not think that it can happen to a relative of theirs (Edgar, personal communication, December 2018).

As Edgar shared this, he became emotional because he knew several people who were either sent back to their native countries or whom had been detained in ICE detention centers in the United States. He continuously went back to the idea of leaders needing to reflect on how they would like members of their own families to be treated. Roberto and Emilio empathized with Edgar, often mentioning that they agreed with him. Roberto shared that he knew what that felt like but did not want to elaborate on it during the pre-intervention interview. Emilio expressed his anger against the U.S. President stating, “My family is involved, and I am Hispanic, and I also understand how they feel. I also think that if he were involved or if he were an immigrant, how would he feel? That also makes me angry!” (Emilio, personal communication, December 2018).

In the post-interview, when asked to reflect on issues that had become more important to them through time, many youth were able to better articulate issues more
than they had four months prior. Many agreed that having this space and group allowed them to think of things at a higher level.

So supposedly my cousins had to go through the desert with the coyote and stuff and we had to send money to a coyote so they could just bring them here. And they had to go to like that immigration like they had to turn themselves in for them just to come over here to America. And after that they had to find a place to stay with people because supposedly there's people that take them in. The immigrants that come over here, they have a place to go. And it's like a lot of them. So, it's not just like a few. It's a lot of them in like one house. And a couple or something is supporting them. And my cousins are like in Dallas and some live in California I think (Amanda, personal interview, March 2019).

Amanda’s story continued to demonstrate her openness with the group, which came with time and through continuous trust building. The issues that were important to her continued to be issues that were personally affecting her family or members of her immediate community. Amanda’s congruence continued to be evident through her vulnerability and storytelling which only enhanced her commitment to this project, the experience, and the processes involved.

Emilio showed a stronger sense of commitment during the post-intervention interview than he did at the beginning.

The rights of immigrants and like the way people see immigrants is a big thing like when people say that Mexicans are rapists and they are not that, so yeah, I don't like to be looked at in that way or even my family you know? (Emilio, personal interview, March 2019).

His commitment and congruence were evident in the sense that he was much more open during the post-intervention interview than he was at the beginning of the process. Emilio shared that he had never participated in a group like the Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nueva Orleans, so he had never really been pushed to think about social justice and community heritage issues like he had over the last four months.
All youth agreed with Karen and Emilio in that they did not think they would be able to share as much as they did with the group. None of them had previously engaged in any kind of youth group or community organizing initiative; therefore, they had no skills for unpacking things that they deemed important but may not have been able to fully articulate to a group of people. At this early stage in the YPEM process, youth participants demonstrated a willingness to work together and share their experiences with an authentic level of vulnerability, relatability, and relevance.

JOVENES DE JUSTICIA: Theme Two

*Storytelling was a process of constructing personal narratives that embedded youth in painful societal issues and deepened group interactions.*

Education was an essential theme in the initial interview, and many of the youth were open about sharing their stories regarding barriers within the education system that had hindered their engagement in a school setting. From language access to qualified ESL teachers, the youth were open about the struggles they had in their school settings. Karen was the first to mention that “education for people who don’t really speak English is a problem” (Karen, personal communication, December 2018). Many of the youth agreed with her statement and Edgar added that he often felt judged by his peers and other teachers for not fully grasping or understanding the English language. From the very beginning, Karen shared that she had experienced instances where teachers assumed that ELL students understood things that were going on in class and later gave consequences to those same kids for not having followed through with an expectation. In reality, these youth admitted to “understanding” out of shame. They would rather deal with consequences later for not knowing how to do something.
And also, okay, let's say you're in tenth grade and you just don't understand English. The teacher or something might treat them way below their grade and not their age and don't treat them the same as other people. Like, you can treat the other person the same no matter what you are. You just have to know how to talk to them differently, but not treat them differently (Karen, personal communication, December 2018).

When discussing this, all of the other youth agreed that they felt as though they were often looked at as dumb in the school environment. Throughout the interview, the feeling of inferiority was evident and a clear cause for lack of engagement in a school setting (and even in their communities). Amanda mentioned that despite all of these things, there were adults in their schools that they felt supported them, particularly their English as a Second Language teachers. She and Karen discussed two teachers in particular who regularly checked up on them and encouraged them to work hard and be engaged in school. Through the process, all youth agreed that they wished they had more people like the teachers working with Karen and Amanda who would push and support them so that they would feel more comfortable in becoming more active in their various environments.

Throughout the sessions held during the implementation of YPEM, many of the youth expressed their appreciation for having a group where they were able to share about their schooling and life experiences. These opportunities were a clear indicator that when youth were provided with space to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, they were more likely to become invested in issues that were directly affecting them. For example, in one of the sessions, Amanda was open about the experiences her family continued to go through regarding the migration of many family members of hers to the United States. Edgar once again touched on the issues of the caravans from Honduras, and it was these rich discussions that led to the idea of creating a panel discussion, to
highlight their experiences, and ways in which people could support immigrants as they learned to live in a foreign environment.

Much of the post-intervention interviews led to these youth sharing stories about their families, about the process, and about their feelings. The mentor deemed this critical in the process because he grew to understand that, in many of their households, feelings were kept to oneself and sharing personal things was simply not a practice or habit. However, it was evident that the sharing of stories was what continued to build community, commitment, and congruence within the group. For example, when asked by the mentor “is this the kind of group that you can share your story in?” All youth agreed with “yes!” Karen further elaborated that she felt comfortable in this group because everyone in the group was Hispanic.

We are Hispanics, that's one thing that we're in common. Right? So, we all we know for a fact that family they've gone through so much with living in the U.S. because so much is going on with immigrants and people saying things about other people because of their race. Because they're not legal. And then like they assume that we're criminals for being here and they think like it's not okay for us to be here when really, we're here to make a better living and all (Karen, personal interview, March 2019).

She continued by explaining more about how fear affects the community. Many immigrated to America to escape unjust laws and improve their standard of living.

[We come here] you know, instead of living in fear because there are laws here that can protect everyone. We want better jobs and salary so kids can live a good life. They have better experiences and can educate themselves on what they can do for a living. And not only that, education in America, once you're working in a job here, you're actually helping improve a system here in America (Karen, personal interview, March 2019).

Still, Karen feels that her family’s intentions are misunderstood even among others in the community. While she aspires to better her life while improving the lives of others, she feels like her motives are questioned.
I'm a Mexican. And they might say ‘oh this Mexican is just doing this to support her people’. Yeah, that's true, but I could also support other people even if they're not Mexican. My friend here is Honduran. They think ‘oh I only support Mexicans because I'm Mexican and like other people like she supports Hondurans because she's Honduran and all’. That's not true. Race doesn't really matter. You know it's just so much going on I feel like I don't know (Karen, personal interview, March 2019).

Karen’s participation in a group of youth with similar experiences to her own was a benefit. She knew that she would not be judged because of her ethnic background, or because of what her family did for a living. She expressed feeling continuously judged by people outside of her own ethnicity; this trend was apparent in her initial interview and in her remarks throughout meetings. All group members agreed that being of the same or similar ethnicities helped strengthen their experiences in the YPEM implementation process.

JOVENES DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL: Theme Three

*Regardless of their actual citizenship status, YPEM process helped youth develop strong sense of identities.*

Building trust between the youth and the mentor was critical for this process. From the very beginning, many of the youth were hesitant to share their stories and perspectives, but as they began to understand that there were commonalities between them, as well as with their mentor, they became more vulnerable. Throughout the implementation of YPEM, youth often asked for ways to collaborate and build community amongst themselves, particularly at the beginning of sessions. Karen, specifically, mentioned wanting to do team building activities that would allow them to get to know each other even more, and so the mentor allowed for this at the beginning of many of the sessions. This trust, along with the safe space provided for storytelling, was
what further helped youth articulate issues affecting them and their communities; they showed a strong sense of commitment for change – even from the very beginning.

While none of the youth had experiences in organizing of any sort, during the initial interview, they shared a number of ideas that they had for ways in which they thought they could assist. This occurred after much hesitancy from the youth and affirmation from the mentor. Given today’s political, economic, social, and educational landscapes, personal experiences, many of which are traumatic, helped to shape the group’s way of thinking. These youth had ideas for becoming involved in their communities if they were provided with the opportunity to do so; however, some expressed not fully trusting “outsiders” to help them. While this was the case, they were able to list some people who could help them, should they need it, though these individuals were family members and people of their same ethnicity.

Edgar provided an example of an issue that he had seen through his own family and provided a potential solution for it.

Sometimes a person, like a Hispanic, can sometimes not feel well with their health and sometimes they feel afraid of not being able to go to places because sometimes I have heard that immigration is massively deporting people, so they are afraid to go to places. Because they supposedly feel threatened… Like hospitals, public places. Where there are public services. They feel threatened by not having too much freedom (Edgar, personal communication, December 2018).

He suggested that a possible solution for this would be having people, Latinos preferably, go into enclaves of communities to inform them of their rights, despite the fact that many of them were undocumented. The fact that he preferred Latinos to take the lead in this demonstrated his lack of trust in people who were different from himself. He further mentioned that people might not be so afraid to look for services if they had someone in
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the community who could support them and share information with them.

In addition to this, Karen reflected on people who had created positive change in their communities in the past and discussed how even a small group of people could create positive change if accompanied with a solid plan.

Like, if someone has an opinion to say about something or they think that something is not right they'll do something in order to like stop it. Or, to do what they think is right. You know? And they'll try to make a change or start something and they're putting their opinion out there. Standing for what's on their mind. People who can make a difference like Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks. The woman that wrote Mango Street. Okay, so people that are young and all, they're inspired by older people. For example, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, they made a change about racism and Rosa Parks was the one that showed the situation that got everyone's attention. She made a statement and had courage for what wasn't fair. She had a plan to stick up for yourself. Don't give a crap about what other people say. Don't let them get to your head. You've got to be you. You have the right to speak your mind. You gotta be yourself. Sometimes people are manipulated by others and not only that, but people think that if someone did this, then they could do what other people do. Because they think it's a good thing that someone does (Karen, personal communication, December 2018).

She elaborated that each of the individuals she spoke about either did something alone or brought people together to help protest for things that were right. In addition, she provided a local example of what could happen when people came together to fight for what was right.

It was in Nicaragua where they started protesting, right? They like protest because they feel like they don't have another way to show their voice. They feel like their voice isn't heard and stuff and like they want to change that. So, people come together to protest and stuff because they want to be heard. They want freedom and stuff, but they still put the effort to at least change that (Karen, personal communication, December 2018).

Throughout the YPEM process, the youth demonstrated high awareness of social structures and issues that affected them and their families directly. This showed their high level of consciousness of self from the very beginning of this project. After they
were able to build some trust between members of the group, they also displayed
congruence through their ability to have honest and open conversations about the things
that they deemed important for themselves, their families, and their communities. They
showed genuineness throughout their interviews, empathizing with one another’s
narratives. By the end of the process, youth were able to share how YPEM helped them
unpack what made them a good citizen. The fact that these youth were able to express
their thoughts on citizenship by the end of the process was huge, given their lack of
understanding of “citizenship” at the very beginning. This, again, spoke to the impact
that trust building had on their ability to meaningfully reflect on their roles in society.
During the closing session, the mentor asked the youth why they thought that everything
they had done thus far made them good citizens. Their responses are listed in Table 5
below.

Table 5

How Undocumented Youth View Citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do you think that everything you have done so far makes you a good citizen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think all of this, well, it’s probably making me a good citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because its showing that I care about more than myself… I am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>showing, like, that I want to… like, make a difference in my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To me… I don’t know if this is right, but I think being a good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citizen is showing that you are… you want to be involved in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making changes in your community. So, like, for example, we did</td>
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<tr>
<td>a lot of research and I basically learned stuff that I didn’t know</td>
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<tr>
<td>about, like about the caravans or whatever, but now I know and if I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk to someone I can show that I care about those things. So, like,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that will show that I am being, or trying to be a good citizen.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Knowing what is going on in the community, what people are feeling… this is very important to me. I want to be a good citizen who shows… who shows that I care about what others go through. That’s why I like this group because it’s more than just, oh let’s sit around and talk about stupid things that we think are important. No, it’s more than that.”

“Being honest makes you a good person and citizen. That is what we are doing here… being honest about us and our families. So, maybe, me saying something about myself and something I went through can help someone else. It helps me make a plan for how I can help someone.”

“I think we are growing in this group to be better citizens. We are learning about each other, and, so, with that we can make a plan for something we can do in the community to help others… that, to me, is being a good citizen… wanting to do more.”

Even as a trust exercise, YPEM empowered undocumented youth to form a cohesive group, realistically assess issues and opportunities, and take courage, thus increasing their capacity for future action

All youth agreed that they were 100% committed to YPEM implementation experience because the topics hit very close to home. They felt that the process was helpful in allowing them to talk about the issues and brainstorm ways in which they could bring these issues to light. In addition, they shared that the process helped them create a collaborative plan that would help engage others in the issues they deemed most important. For example, Edgar shared these thoughts.

We had a persuasive way of getting people's attention. To come over here and talk about this. You know what the problem is, and why we need support you know. Other people they understand what's going on and once they understood they. They decided to help us and give us ideas of what we should do. You know to make us improve. This was how our guests were able to help us. (Edgar, personal communication, March 2019).
Amanda shared that being able to communicate and work through disagreements helped them come up with stronger ideas to brainstorm through. All youth agreed.

We brainstormed all of them and agreed on certain situations that people should realize that are going on. We made a compromise too about it. What are the agreements and disagreements? And then find a way to make it equal or even you know you know? (Amanda, personal communication, March 2019).

It was evident that a common cause made it easier for the youth to come to a consensus on thoughts, ideas, and steps for moving forward. Throughout all phases on the project, a common cause emerged given the youth’s shared life experiences.

JOVENES DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL: YPEM Strategies

During the research period many strategies emerged as imperative for the growth and empowerment of this group. Evidence for this came in the form of quotes from meetings and/or interviews or actual actions taken by the youth at any given point in time. Table 6 summarizes the strategies for group three participants.

Table 6

*Effective Strategies for Participant Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating and Using Norms of</td>
<td>In the first meeting, youth created a list of norms for collaborating and working with one another. Going around in a circle, each youth shared one norm that they would like for everyone in the group to follow. The norms included: Be kind and respectful; Listen to everyone’s opinions and don’t be rude if you do not agree with them; Work together; Don’t shout or be rude if you don’t like something someone says… you can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Active Listening
Youth were required to practice active listening skills as they shared their own personal narratives with one another throughout the process. This collaborative norm was instrumental in creating trust.

Youth demonstrated active listening, particularly agreeing or relating to another person’s story or feelings. For example, during one of the interviews Roberto and Emilio empathized with Edgar, often mentioning that they agreed with him and his claims about the current political climate.

## Establishing Trust
Trust was a recurring theme, and the youth were quick to share the need to have team building activities to help them learn more about each other. As such, by meeting two, the mentor began implementing team building activities and allowed for “free time” that would allow youth to learn more about each other on a personal level.

Edgar was adamant about building trust within the group because he expressed his distrust of “the system.” For example, he mentioned, “I have heard that immigration is massively deporting people, so they are afraid to go to places. Because they supposedly feel threatened… Like hospitals, public places. Where there are public services. They feel threatened by not having too much freedom (Edgar, personal communication, December 2018). This feeling of distrust is what rooted the need for establishing trust within the youth group.

## Vulnerability and Storytelling
Each part of the project showed youth demonstrating vulnerability, which strengthened as the process went on. As such, many of them shared personal stories of negative issues happening to their families. For example, Karen discussed how the unsuccessful migration of her cousins from Honduras made her feel bad.

Youth were vulnerable enough to share that their identities
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

were stigmatized in a negative way in the United States. For example, “The rights of immigrants and like the way people see immigrants is a big thing like when people say that Mexicans are rapists and they are not that, so yeah, I don't like to be looked at in that way or even my family you know?”
(Emilio, personal interview, March 2019)

JOVENES DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL: YPEM and Overall Reflections

The youth and mentor agreed that the Youth Participatory Empowerment Model presented through this process was helpful, particularly the lesson plans within the model. In addition, it was helpful seeing how the “Seven C’s” emerged through many of the stages of YPEM. While YPEM shows stages as being linear, the implementation with this population of youth demonstrated the stages could be fluid. One could start at stage one and end up at stage three by the end of a session. Or, the group may start at stage 4 and need to go back to stage 2 to refine some of the steps taken for a number of reasons.

Throughout this process, trust was a great issue that emerged from the very beginning. Given how vulnerable this population was, parents came into the process hesitantly, which, in turn, created a sense of hesitation amongst the members of the youth group. The importance of trust was evident in the second meeting when youth, themselves, requested more team building opportunities that would allow them to get to know one another better – to build the trust necessary to work together in an effective way. Further, trust became an issue when the mentor invited outside guests to join the group for a discussion. In particular, two students completely shut down during this portion of the session, expressing that they did not trust people from outside of the group. It took a few sessions for the youth to trust the mentor, especially after one youth referred
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

to him as an “Americanized Latino” during the sharing of personal stories. In this instance, youth wanted it to be known that while the mentor shared similar experiences as them, most of the mentor’s experiences remained vastly different.

Finally, all involved agreed that time was an issue. One youth suggested making YPEM implementation a “school-year long thing” so that they could have more time to plan, engage with potential partners, and execute their end goal. All agreed that they felt pressured to rush the process in order to have things accomplished within the period allotted and argued that the end results would be more meaningful and valuable if this were to be a more fluid experience.
CASE STUDY FOUR: FERGUSON YOUTH

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a) a community heritage, or b) social justice need among a variety of demographic groups across the United States. This sector was a predominately African American suburb of North St. Louis County, located in Missouri.

FERGUSON YOUTH: Participants and Process

The Ferguson Youth Advisory Board consists of seven suburban schoolchildren ages 14 to 18 years. The Ferguson Youth Advisory Board (FYAB) is intended to have 15 members, 10 being youth and five being non-voting adults, one from each ward within the city. The youth are all students in the Ferguson Florissant School District. Ferguson Youth Advisory Board members provide insight and feedback on issues related to youth in the community. They are the official youth voice of the Ferguson Youth Initiative and help determine how citizens use their energies and resources to benefit the public. FYAB members are eligible for the Gail Babcock Scholarship in their senior year (Ferguson Youth Initiative, 2018).

The school district serves students from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade within the district area. The population has a 50% free and reduced lunch rate and 83% of the student population is African American with 9.3% being Caucasian. The four-year graduation rate is 87% and the average ACT score is 15.6 (Missouri Department of Secondary Education, Ferguson-Florissant RII, 2019). Ferguson Florissant School District services multiple municipalities in North St. Louis County including but not
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

limited to Ferguson, Florissant, Unincorporated St. Louis County, and Berkley. There are currently 17 elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools as well as an alternative school. The district is in the middle of a redistricting, which will dramatically affect enrollment in their various programs (Ferguson-Florissant School District, 2019).

The mentor, Alex, has worked with the youth on the Advisory Board for over two years. His full-time job is to support them in their endeavors; as well, he supports the Ferguson Youth Initiative, which works with youth in the Ferguson area on a variety of goals and objectives. Alex works with the local school district to support the needs of the youth by providing safe spaces for gathering, resources, job training, education, and adult mentors. Alex also is on the adult FYAB board and maintains day-to-day operations of the organization. He is responsible for event planning, marketing, employment, and all other functions of FYAB and FYI. The programs are sustained using grant money and other donations. Alex is passionate about youth and youth voice being heard by city officials. He is an advocate for the community and the school district. He is also an avid participant in the neighboring communities as they are affected by the school district and community decisions that take place in Ferguson. Alex’s position as full-time executive director is essential to the success of the group. He has a program director that works within the program to support FYAB’s endeavors. Without salary and time set aside by programming, FYAB would not be nearly as successful in the community.

Alex knew the importance of having outside support. In addition, one of the adult members is part of the adult board, which made the connection stronger. Alex met with the researcher without reservation and supported additional work outside of the research.
The community in and around Ferguson has been decimated after the death of Michael Brown. The neighborhood has been tainted by newscasts and perceptions perpetrated by the media about their home. This had made growth and citizen engagement difficult. The landscape of Ferguson was significantly changed due to violence, looting, burning, and protests that followed this event. FYI was formed out of the chaos of Michael Brown’s death. It was designed to give youth voice and vote in city matters.

Prom is a pillar within a youth’s life. It is a time that marks a transition out of high school and into the adult world. It is a time cherished by teenagers where they can just be young and free. In Ferguson, that is unique, because of the constant underlying current of mistrust and racial tension. FYAB chose to have an alternate prom after party to address social justice needs within the community. The president felt firmly that drug use, alcohol consumption, violence, and sexually risky behavior occurred during prom activities. To address the high likelihood of those high-risk youth behaviors, the president wanted to offer an alternative to those activities. In addition, Operation Prom Nite’s mission is to enable youth from all backgrounds to attend prom without financial barriers. Youth that participated had access to dresses, tuxedos, shoes, and bags for their prom at no cost to the participants. This was very relevant considering that nearly a quarter of residents are at the poverty level in the city of Ferguson. After some changes to the original design, the group came to consensus on the event and thus the project was born. The evidence below demonstrates how YPEM was used to support and direct that process.

Through the use of pre- and post-interview questions, observational data, and
other information collected during the research time frame, themes emerged that illustrated commonalities essential to the empowerment of youth. These themes were analyzed using evidence from all interactions with the participants. These themes are as follows:

FERGUSON YOUTH: Theme One

*Adult mentors provided emotional support and a resource rich environment ensuring that youth felt confident as they navigated the ups and downs of YPEM process.*

When entering the physical space where FYAB gatherings take place, a visitor would find the room set up to be inviting. The space is equipped with Wi-Fi, video gaming systems, cable, television, food, water, and other necessary facilities. It is surrounded with advertisements for opportunities for youth and for community activities. In addition, it is locked from the inside so that the youth feel safe when they are present. This space allows the youth to focus on community engagement and work towards their goals rather than work on meeting their personal needs which is a struggle for many of their peers.

Outside of the meeting space, there is an additional space for events that is adjacent to the meeting room. The room has a small stage, lighting, access to facilities, and wireless internet services. A large mural hangs on the wall that youth designed following Michael Brown’s death in Ferguson. This symbol stands tall as a reminder of why the group is here and what their purpose is in the community. The mural stands for change and rebirth of a new Ferguson, one that embraces human rights and social justice. This is where Operation Prom Nite hosted their event while the party was held in the meeting space. This space is part of the Ferguson City Hall complex. The executive
director and government partners donated the meeting space to the youth to recognize and emphasize the importance of safe place. That security in space is essential for empowering youth because it gives them a sense of safety. Safety, in turn, is something that Alex thinks is imperative to them being able to just be teens and feel as important as teens should (Alex, personal communication, March 21, 2019; personal communication, December 3, 2018).

Alex understands the importance of building trust amongst the youth participants. Alex is passionate about allowing the youth to lead meetings and allowing them to vote on partnerships. He connects adults and youth and facilitates open communication between the two groups via communication methods that are engaging for youth participants (Alex, personal communication, March 21, 2019). Alex’s motivation to work with youth reflects his investment in community. Alex states that building connections is one of the most motivating factors when working with youth. Alex stated that he wants to be a “power source” for youth so that in the future they will get involved in the community and make change. He highlights using active listening as a key skill to develop a cycle of trust with youth.

[When a youth is]...talking to you that means they have taken you into their trust circle. So, they are letting you know, ‘Hey this is what's going on with me,’ and it maybe 99.9% fluff. You know they're the star basketball player, they’re the it person on campus and they're the most with it but that point one percent where they say, ‘Hey my mom's never home. Ain’t nobody home to make sure I do curfew,’ or ‘I'm pretty much on my own’. That point one percent is the most important to you as an adult because when you know what a child is dealing with, what they walk through the door with, versus all the fluff that they told you about being the most popular person and all that other. You have to listen for that point one percent (Alex, personal communication, October 22, 2018).
Structurally, meetings are led by the youth. Adults are asked to sit at the end of the table as the head is reserved for the youth leaders. Community members and partners present to the youth participants and ask the youth participants if they think they would be interested in supporting their endeavors and youth events are generated, curated, and run by youth with minimal input by adult participants. Alex empowers the youth by letting them run the board independent of adult influence, pick and address the issues that are important to them, and choose partnerships that reflect their passions. Youth are added without discrimination and there is no voting process, which allows youth to commit to the process without fear of rejection. The mission of FYAB is to empower teens from Ferguson and surrounding communities to become productive, positive, and contributing members of the community.

For this event, the youth members were passionate about providing youth in their community with an alternative to drinking, drug use, and the violence that follows prom night. There has been a steady uptick in crime and violence in the community and surrounding areas for some time and youth are often participants in these altercations. In addition, like the rest of the country, growing opioid issues plague the North County area of St. Louis. The youth members also wanted to support Operation Prom Nite as they confronted poverty and lack of access for members of the Ferguson community and the school district. Alex supported Leah as she reached out to Operation Prom Nite to see if they would be interested in partnering with them to support the Pre-Prom party. They agreed and then an Operation Prom Nite representative attended the planning meetings to continue to solidify their plans. Alex reached out to many neighborhood connections as well to secure make-up artists, photographers, nail techs, and hair stylists for the event.
Those community volunteers also attended the planning meetings to come to an agreement about expectations for the event. Alex also guided the youth through the setup of the event and provided them with social media advertising to share with peers. The group communicated using a social media-messaging app in between meetings to keep communication going and keep each other accountable.

While the group experienced ebbs and flows throughout the process (e.g., lack of interest in original idea, absence of youth leadership, inconsistent partnerships), Alex continued to guide the youth throughout the process helping them gain confidence in their ideas and abilities to reach out within the community. Once the event had concluded, the youth were proud to have accomplished their goal.

FERGUSON YOUTH: Theme Two

Ferguson youth demonstrated differing levels of youth leadership involvement and expertise, but because youth members saw themselves as part of a process that they understood and supported, even in the absence of strong leaders, they were able to step in and lead effectively.

Alex has a positive and uplifting belief system regarding youth empowerment and youth voice. He has taken care to set up norms within his group that reflects not only his consciousness of self but also the importance of congruence in his work. Alex has a firm belief about working together for the benefit of all. During interviews, Alex expressed that his role is to assist with the growth of teens to make a positive impact within the community. Alex believes that youth are the lifeblood of a community and that, when leadership ignores their desires, they are guilty of building a community from the “top down” as compared to a “bottom-up” approach. He discussed the importance of having circles of adults to support youth and create safe spaces for them and being solution-
minded versus problem-minded so that trust building and healing can begin. In addition, adults who do not justify their mistakes, but instead, help youth learn from them should surround youth. He also discussed opening dialogue for youth and just listening to them to let them connect to you so that you can provide for them emotionally (Alex, personal communication, October 19, 2018; personal communication, December 15, 2018).

The structure of FYAB calls for a President, Vice President, and Secretary. In the event of an absence, the next ranking officer runs meetings and agendas. Since youth are entirely responsible for running meetings and events, it is imperative that youth are present. When leadership was present, the group ran smoothly. Leah, FYAB President, controlled the process and made sure to follow YPEM. She supported the other youth members in designing an action plan. When she was present, she led with authority and independence. Leah used a democratic process and asked for votes when considering new initiatives or partnerships. Leah often asked others directly for their input during meetings to ensure that all participants had a chance to be heard. During the initial and final interview, she spoke with passion and knowledge. Her presence was key to the implementation of YPEM and empowerment within the group.

Leah has many role models for leadership. Leah cited some local government officials as mentors for herself such as Cori Bush and Wesley Bell. She said that their faith in other people inspires her and their advice to speak up and stand up for yourself is one of the most important strategies she has learned (Leah, personal communication, November 21, 2018). Due to these many attributes and partnerships, Leah has developed the skills necessary to lead youth to empowerment. Leah also understands the cyclical nature of community and how residents can affect it.
...the community is built up a diverse group of people even though they all may look the same, sound the same. They’re still a diverse group of people. Especially, particularly for me, North County. And you have to partner with people that represent those different people...if you really want to facilitate change for the entire community...you need to find representatives that represent every single part of that community. I think partnerships are the most necessary thing. (Leah, personal communication, November 21, 2018).

As the group worked through the YPEM process, Leah’s availability was inconsistent. She was only present for about half of the interactions with the group, which made progressing through YPEM difficult, as she was the lead within the group. During the initial meeting, Leah brought up the Post-Prom Party idea and received mixed reactions from the group. The youth members were not excited about the event and many had questions about where and when the event would take place. The group had no consensus and little interest in supporting the idea, which led to a lack of congruence and common purpose (personal communication, December 3, 2018).

During the group discussions, while engaging in Stage Three of YPEM, the other youth participants informed the resident that there was no interest in a post-prom party. The president was upset and tried to push back but the group kept reiterating that no one would attend. Leah was disappointed with the change of the event from a Post-Prom Party to a Pre-Prom Party. She discussed her disappointment in detail.

Oh, we rarely had disagreements. Except the one where no one was coming to the post prom. So yeah that was it. And that was kind of a bummer for me. But you know it was a realization. You know to not do something stupid and plan something and nobody come. I'm glad we talked about that. (Leah, personal communication, March 19, 2019)
The group decided to change the event to a pre-prom party where they could work with an existing partner and provide youth with food, stylists, make-up artist, nail techs, music, and a place to hang out which would also dissuade drinking and drug use before prom. This idea was empowering for the group. There was congruence among the members and the group began participating with a renewed interest and passion. In addition, this idea would influence their community in a positive way. Supporting their peers in a natural way and allowing them to obtain items necessary to enjoy a typical teen event solved a social justice need in their community.

To get started, the youth group contacted the Operation Prom Nite partner. Then they identified additional partners and vendors to work with and to push out advertisement materials. The group was finally demonstrating engagement and involvement in the process. The adult board members also felt more connected to the event and the success of it. With the emergence of congruence, the group was able to fulfill their goals and meet the social justice need within the community. Without congruence, the event never would have emerged with the level of support that it has (personal communication, February 3, 2019; personal communication, March 4, 2019).

With Leah’s absence, other youth members had to step into the leadership role. This was uncomfortable for a lot of them as they had been under Leah’s direction for some time. At times, Kenny was left to take on the leadership responsibilities. He is extremely shy so when youth input was asked for during meetings, he spoke very little. Without a strong youth leader, youth voice was diminished in these meetings which left a void in the feedback loop and suspended progress on the project (personal communication, December 15, 2018; personal communication, January 7, 2019).
members of the group discussed their discomfort with being in the leadership role. There were awkward moments and lack of direction due to the lack of interest from other members of the group. That being said, when asked for reflection, the youth members stated that they thought they had grown in her absence.

[The most important thing I learned was about...] Getting involved. Because like I know when I go to college, I'm probably going to end up being. I don't want to be this type of person. I'm probably going to be like super reserved and stuff. So definitely like kind of putting myself out there and trying new things (Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

During her interview, Leah acknowledged that her absence weighed on the group. She explained in the post interview that she wished she could have been present more frequently as to lead more effectively.

Unfortunately, I wish I was probably just a tad bit more involved. I wish that I had more to...to speak on during meetings. I wish that I probably would have grabbed a stronger rein on what needed to be done and probably designated people to jobs. So that way everybody feels more included instead of were doing this and you guys just have to be there or were doing this, and you guys just have to approve it. And I wish that I would have done that. (Leah, personal interview, March 19, 2019).

FERGUSON YOUTH: Theme Three

Partnerships designed to meet the youth’s emotional and logistical needs were essential in empowering youth to address social justice issues in their community.

Alex has put in significant time to build relationships within the community and connect people and resources. He is firmly connected to the local school district, churches, and businesses within the area. He knows who can support him and his causes and how to work with them to reach their goals. When asked about partnerships and community, Alex stated that he felt like Ferguson was like a big dysfunctional family.
They have their difficulties, but they all love each other and work together for the benefit of the community (Alex, personal communication, October 22, 2018).

These partnerships have been embedded into the function of the group by having local representation on the youth and adult board from the school district, local college, and area businesses. Each month, different community partners come and present to the group to see if the youth are interested in collaborating with them for future events or to let them know about opportunities available to them. During the researcher’s time with the group, the list of partners included American Red Cross, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, St. Louis Effort for AIDS, University of Missouri St. Louis, Enterprise, True False Film Festival, St. Louis Zoo, City of Ferguson employees, Ferguson-Florissant School District representatives, business partners, church partners, and many more.

These partnerships extended far beyond superficial connections and a lot of that is due to Alex’s belief in the importance of wrapping youth in support. During the initial interview, Alex talked about the connections with the purpose of providing youth with wrap-around support to provide them with basic needs and open communication. He believes that placing youth in a wide circle of support builds their confidence. Supportive adults help youth feel like they could make a mistake and still. Alex’s goal is to have adults serve as role models for youth and support them emotionally. He especially looks for adults that listen for the intimate details that affect youth lives and are willing to help meet those needs. This was observed many times through interactions between the adults and the youth members. Building a community in Ferguson again is a goal for young adults in Ferguson, and supporting the youth to be those advocates is important to the FYAB participants (Alex, personal communication, October 22, 2018).
Outside of emotional support partnerships, there are practical partnerships that are well represented within the framework of FYAB. The agenda allots time to engaging within those partnerships and learning from each other to build a stronger community. Everything that FYAB has built relies on partnerships, including the very building they meet in—Ferguson City Hall. The space has been gifted to them for use when they meet, for their events, which provides them with a home. In addition, the Ferguson City Council has active members on the youth board that attend all meetings and have personal connections with participants. During meetings they could be heard asking youth members about colleges, telling them to check out different scholarships, offering letters for reference, and asking about ACT scores (personal communication, January 7, 2019; personal communication, March 4, 2019). The security of place and purpose enables youth’s passion and drive.

All of the events that FYAB supports have community partners attached to them. Some partnerships provide minimal guidance and support, while others lead the event entirely. During the research period many different models of partnerships were observed. The True False film festival was an entirely separate event from FYAB but requested attendance by the group organizers. The Black History Slam event was a collaboration, sponsored by the AKA Sorority, with FYAB as equal partner; it evolved into a predominately FYAB led event, while the video game competition was entirely FYAB led.

For the pre-prom event, an existing partner was already hosting an event. The goal of the event was to provide youth with free dresses, shoes, tuxes, and accessories for their upcoming prom. Since the group had a prior connection to Operation Prom Nite,
they came to talk with the youth participants about working together during the event at FYAB’s monthly meeting. The new partner was eager to work with the group to make the event a success and explained their process and how FYAB could collaborate with them. The team worked out logistics regarding times and space as well as how the event would flow. The youth group identified other partners to provide food, salon services, and other needs they identified (personal communication, March 4, 2019).

Providing these services for youth in the community was very important for the youth members. Many students in the area come from a place of having little. Over one fifth of Ferguson is at the poverty level and surrounding communities have much higher rates of poverty. The youth in North County tend to live transient lifestyles, moving frequently within the community when leases are up, or relationships fall apart. It is difficult to maintain employment and youth are often called upon to be providers within families. That leaves little available for luxuries like prom dresses and shoes. In addition, violence and drug use are prevalent in communities surrounding Ferguson. The youth members were passionate about offering youth a safe place where they could come and just be a teen getting ready for prom with their friends. At the event, all but one youth board member was present. Adults mingled with the youth as all enjoyed music, food, and the luxuries of a safe and enjoyable pre-prom party (personal communication, March 4, 2019).

Due to the transient nature of many within North County residents, it is difficult to build a sense of citizenship. Rapid movement of residents as well as deficient infrastructure within many communities surrounding Ferguson affect the ability of youth to connect with their community on a civic level. The youth group did have an ingrained
understanding of community and the cyclical nature of community. They understood the concepts of family and community much more than civic issues. During the initial interviews, the youth discussed the different facets of community. Kenny talked about being supported by community members and looking after it to protect the community at large. Vera talked about bringing neighborhoods together to accomplish goals. Elicia talked about her role models and how they supported her in giving back to the community and in being a leader in that part of her life. Eric discussed the rings of community and the ripple effects of individual problems having an impact on the school and then the community. They stated that being present and active is the most important thing they can do within their community. The question was raised whether it is more important to be a good community member or an active civil servant (Leah, personal communication, November 21, 2018; Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, January 7, 2019).

FERGUSON YOUTH: YPEM Strategies

During the research period many strategies emerged as imperative for the growth and empowerment of this group. Table 7, summarizes those strategies.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Strategies for Participant Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
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<td>Active Listening</td>
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person on campus and they're the most with it but that point one percent where they say, ‘Hey my mom's never home. Ain’t nobody home to make sure I do curfew,’ or ‘I'm pretty much on my own.’ That point one percent is the most important to you as an adult because when you know what a child is dealing with, what they walk through the door with, versus all the fluff that they told you about being the most popular person and all that other. You have to listen for that point one percent” (Alex, personal communication, October 22, 2018).

Adult members of FYAB were observed asking youth members about their college search, how they did on their ACT’s, and about their jobs. Them noticing and inquiring about the youth’s personal lives ingrained the importance of what the youth were communicating. Paying attention to details (where they had applied, what their last ACT score was, what their position was) supported the adult’s belief in active listening (personal communication, March 3, 2019).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Planning Tools</th>
<th>“Just writing it down. Writing it down” (Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, March 4, 2019).</th>
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<td></td>
<td>“I don't know what it's called but that that paper that you had. That paper that you had. That graphic organizer? I think that helped a lot. So, people could kind of see as we were talking about it what we were talking about you know what we didn't want what we did want you know. So, I think that helped a lot. So, it wasn't just we were talking to each other and nodding and yessing. We were actually reading it and you know going along with it” (Leah, personal communication, November 21, 2018).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“...the step by step worked well. It kept them on task and kept them guided. Oftentimes when we plan events, we kinda go in. Everything is getting thrown out and trying to get everything done at once verse doing in an ordered fashion” (Alex, personal communication, March 21, 2019).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistent and Frequent Communication</td>
<td>“We were missing members, or we were trying to discuss the details within our group chat outside of the meetings. We communicated to some members and we never heard back for things like that. I think that's the hardest thing” (Leah, personal communication, March 19, 2019).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Allowing them to speak as often as they want about it and getting a sensibility of, they can reach me on messenger or whatever or whatever have you. Or reach the adults on messenger or whatever have you” (Alex, personal communication, March 21, 2019).

Varied Perspectives

“I think it definitely helped because we were able to like bounce ideas off of each other” (Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

“I think it helped because 7 or 8 heads are better than one” (Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

“So, you can have two opinions that are right” (Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, January 7, 2019).

“So, you can have a better community. Like two inputs” (Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, January 7, 2019).

FERGUSON YOUTH: YPEM and Overall Reflection

At the end of the research, the youth studied a diagram that represented the steps of YPEM. The youth then told the researcher what the visual meant to them.

So, the circle with the society and communities who we’re trying to serve. And then I guess in a way the group what we were doing was trying to be on the same page in order to serve the community. And when we were serving the community you also think like the people who were serving. So that market...so serving the youth people, people in the district, what they need. So, you know these are mainly people who do not have money to afford prom dresses, so we had to make it welcoming for that but also serve the needs of those individual people that's part of the society that we are serving. (Leah, personal communication, March 21, 2019)

Other youth had different perspectives on the diagram. “It makes us work together” was the response from one of the youngest participants, Eric, noting the cyclical nature of the diagram. Elicia noted the pyramid shape of the diagram and the structure. “Like the partnerships and action stuff is like the base foundation of everything.
So, it holds us up. (Elicia, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

Watching the group grow during YPEM implementation suggested the importance of the strategic and formal guidance when empowering youth to create change. Their feedback highlighted the necessity of having a structured, inclusive setting.

I think as long as youth groups keep in mind that they are the focus is the youth and that their voice should be heard more than the adults in the room. If those youth groups keep that going, then we will keep building to that better future that we all can celebrate. Versus having a youth group that the adults run and tell the kids what they're going to do, when they're going to do it, and how they're going to do it and expecting the kids to remain engaged and enrolled. (Alex, personal communication, March 21, 2019)
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

CASE STUDY FIVE: ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH GROUP

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a) a community heritage, or b) social justice need among a variety of demographic groups across the United States. This sector was one of a rural community located in Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri, a Midwestern state in the United States.

ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH: Participants and Process

The Elk Prairie 4-H youth group was established by the group’s mentor who had previously been a part of another chapter but had a leadership philosophy that was not reflected in the prior group. She spoke of the decision to start a new chapter in her initial interview. “There were parts that I felt like in our county [group] were missing. So, I decided that if I started my own club that I could attack it from the perspective that I know 4-H. So that was my inspiration.” Susan explained herself.

The leadership piece I felt like was a key missing piece. We had been a member of another 4-H club that was very much leader led instead of youth-led. I wanted to provide youth with an opportunity to be leaders because for me that is what this club is all about. They need to learn to lead in every avenue. (Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

The mentor has a deep belief in the value of youth-led endeavors.

Susan, the mentor, is an impassioned leader of the 4-H youth group. She is a lifelong member of the organization and is from a long line of farmers, and she is still engaged in farming. She is also a public-school educator and a lifetime resident of Phelps County. She is active in the community. She and her husband have three
children, one of whom is a graduate from the local school, two are still enrolled in school and all have been active in the Future Farmers of America and 4-H youth group. Youth participants in this case study ranged in age from eight to eighteen.

When contacted about the project, Susan was welcoming and eager. She presented the idea to be involved in this research to the youth officers of the group the spring before the research began so that they could discuss and vote on it. They voted to be involved, and Susan prepared them for a positive, engaging experience. The Elk Prairie 4-H youth group is part of a state organization and one of their state goals is leadership and community service, so their participation in this will give them hours toward winning state recognition.

The researcher met the youth at an ice cream social that Susan arranged for their end of year meeting. Youth participants and parents gathered at a location in town. The group invited potential members to come meet the older members. The ice cream social is one of many engagement opportunities that Susan and the group enjoy together. Susan explained that “country kids” never get to hear the ice cream truck that comes through the town during the summer, so she hired the ice cream truck to provide the kids this special opportunity. The group celebrated member accomplishments, and Susan introduced the researcher so that the researcher could talk to the parents and youth about their potential involvement as participants group in this study.

Youth participants appeared nervous and unsure of the researcher’s involvement. Youth sat in a circle on the lawn of the town veterinary clinic and the researcher explained the research. The researcher asked youth participants to go around the circle and share one thing that matters to them. The researcher encouraged youth participants to
respond to what others shared. If what one member shared also mattered to others in the

group, each member could raise a hand in solidarity. The only rule was that each

member had to offer a unique answer. This activity served as a warmup exercise, but

also helped youth in the group think about what they value. This was a natural process

for the participating members. The researcher highlighted shared ideas among the group.

The universal values they spoke of included family, faith, their animals, friends, helping

others, and their community. The researcher asked the group members to elaborate on

what makes their community important and they spoke of being safe, having support,

helping people, and sharing common values.

The cultural values of multi-generational farming and agriculture in this

community, the dichotomy of the geographic nature of the county, were expressed early

and consistently throughout the duration of this study. The youth participants worked

through the process of YPEM to select a project focus, research issues, implement project

steps, and begin a project. Early in project focus process, members of the club discussed

issues that are important to them. Selena said, “Livestock is important because

it provides a food source” (personal communication, October 11, 2018) to which Mia

replied, “And if we don’t get enough meat, we won’t be healthy” (personal

communication, Youth Focus Group, October 11, 2018). Despite the group’s passionate

value for the agricultural industry, several expressed that they do not think that the

majority of their community recognize its value.

They don't really support farming and ranching. I think many people

misunderstand the term of livestock. They see what they want to see instead of

what is actually happening what is going on. What is behind the curtain vs. what

is actually in play? There's a lot of work behind everything. (Hope, personal

communication, October 11, 2018)
As the focus group discussed this, there was a sense of frustration that the members of the community do not connect to this piece of the county’s heritage, despite their efforts to preserve it. The recognition of this fact led them to identify a mission to educate people in the community more about who they are and what they do. Another member, Mia, pointed to the fact that people tend to be “heavily dependent on technology” and that one way to change that is to get outdoors more (personal communication, October 11, 2018). They considered perspectives, cultural competence, and partnerships that could work to give the project a chance.

The group selected, as their project focus, a community agronomy garden using native regional plants. After brainstorming, discussing, visiting potential garden sites, and relating back to their core values, they concluded that the agronomy garden would provide an opportunity to educate members of the community about local agricultural heritage and the 4-H youth club. The group came to a consensus about the project mission: to illuminate the 4-H mission for native Missouri agricultural education.

With pre- and post-interview questions, observational data, and other information collected during the research period, themes imperative to the empowerment of youth emerged. These themes were analyzed using evidence from interactions with the participants. Elaboration of the themes follow.

PHELPS COUNTY 4-H YOUTH: Theme One

*Youth had limited opportunity to cultivate authentic voice and self-directed engagement because of the formality of procedures, a tendency for parents to overrule youth suggestions, and the emergence of a “group think” mindset among youth participants after brainstorming. However, the formal process did create structure and clear expectations for behavior and group members did articulate an abstract understanding about how to handle disagreement.*
Elk Prairie 4-H has established procedural norms to encourage youth voice and civil discussion. In stage one of YPEM, the forming of the group calls for establishing group norms, and this step was obvious throughout all observations of the group in action. Since this group is well established, the group has adopted norms and procedures that allow the meetings to be led by the elected officers of the club, who are youth members. The group has an established tradition of beginning each meeting with a recitation of the American Pledge of Allegiance and then the 4-H motto. The motto says, “I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living; for my club, my community, my country and my world” (National 4-H Motto). Embedded in this motto is community, which is a centerpiece of the group’s focus. The group conducts all of its meetings following Robert’s Rules for Parliamentary Procedure. The 4-H motto reflects themes and attributes of YPEM. These pre-established values emerged throughout the research.

Following roll call, Hope, the president conducts the meeting. The youth officers sit at a table in front of the room, facing the youth, who are intermingled with their parents in seats that face the front. In the initial meetings, the tables were in a front-facing row. The youth leader calls for the reading of reports, secretary report, treasurer report; each has to have a motion to approve, a second to the motion and a full group vote to approve. This established routine helps the members to learn the norms, and to be in the habit of practicing them. Adult mentors sometimes aid in the process from the sidelines. For instance, if the youth leader forgets a step in the procedure, the mentor may say, “you need to allow time for discussion before taking a vote” or “this can be covered under old business.” Likewise, parents in attendance also help to encourage their
child to make a motion, volunteer to lead one of the pledges, or second a motion” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Having the guides on the side can help the youth to maintain the process.

While the norms and adult mentors present an overall positive environment for the youth and set them up to manage the group as leaders, the researcher noted that there are times during discussion when parents speak out as part of the discussion. With the presence of the parents and age discrepancy, some of the youth seem reluctant to share ideas and the vote may indicate a group think environment, rather than authentic voice of each youth. One example was when youth discussed a location that they felt would elicit community visitor participation. By this point in the process, the youth participants had chosen a project focus: to design and develop a native agronomy garden to promote education about community agricultural heritage. The youth participants discussed possible locations and thought that a space along a new stretch of highway would promote visibility. A parent noted that there might be safety issues with the location. The youth dismissed the location and another member suggested revitalizing the abandoned outdoor classrooms, but another parent suggested that there were safety issues at that location as well. Two youth participants mentioned the outdoor classroom again in the post-interview. The researcher asked the group to consider what they might do differently if they were starting the project over. Mia said, “I want to do something with the outdoor classroom” and Bre said, “yeah, like put the garden at the schools at the outdoor classroom” (personal communication, March 14, 2019). This indicates that the youth, while respectful of parent concerns, are not completely sure why parents dismissed the idea. If the youth had space to explore the opportunity, they may have come to the
same conclusion about its safety, or they may have discovered that there are steps that could be helpful in revitalizing the space in a safe way. While the safety of the youth is of utmost importance, the researcher noted that allowing the youth to explore the idea and learn about safety concerns as they proceeded to investigate the opportunities with the city or school may have helped the youth to own the decision to find another location. Alternatively, the youth participants might have been able to facilitate a solution to the safety concerns, rather than simply forfeiting the ideas based on adult input. This post-implementation response gives an indication that the youth did not feel heard. Because parents are present and active in meetings, it is difficult to gauge whether youth have voice on decisions or whether decisions are adult driven.

Despite some room for improvement of the process, it is because the group had established procedural norms that youth felt safe in their group environment; this is clear when they disagree during discussions. Youth have a built-in system that allows for civil discussion and then a vote. While the scenario above may have been an instance where adults overshadowed youth voice that is not a core value of the club or of the group’s mentor.

Our club is youth-led. My co-leader and I are listeners first. We will often just interject some thoughts, but the discussions we feel are best if someone just monitors them. The conversation and the dialogue back and forth usually works itself out. We all have rights. We have already prepared them for we are not all going to agree. We are in a world of majority rules. We follow parliamentary procedure. If we are going to make a decision, it's going to have to be someone's idea and you're going to have to get at least one person to support you and then you have to be prepared for discussion afterward. If the majority gets on board, and it passes, then we are all in it together. (Susan, personal communication, 2018)
Recognition of youth voice is imperative to youth empowerment. It is worth noting that Susan was not present at the meeting where the outdoor classroom came up. Had she been there, the outcome may have been different. The strength of established norms set this participant group up to be able to make the change in their community.

Youth expressed that it is important for the people who notice an issue that needs attention to work together to try to fix the issue. When asked to describe how to handle differences of opinion within a group, participants agreed that balancing divergent viewpoints could be a struggle, Hope said, “you try to find that middle point.” Mitchell said, “I make compromises” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Others expressed the need to persuade, for example, Selena said, “I voice my opinion, but also at some points try to get them to also agree,” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Hope cited “communication” and “trying to understand where [the other] is coming from” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). The group discussed among themselves how people are usually not completely right or wrong, and that helping people meet in the middle is the best way to work together. On this topic, the group demonstrated that they have spent time in group situations and have been taught strategies for handling disagreement. Susan recognized that the norms were helpful in the success of the group’s native agronomy garden project. “I do think this has been most successful because you were able to come into a group that was already together, so we didn't have to worry about youth building trust with each other while you were trying to build trust with them” (personal communication, March 29, 2019).
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH: Theme Two

Parallel involvement in YPEM process and fun group activities led to trust, confidence, cohesiveness, and the courage to persevere despite failure.

Team building allows for youth participants to feel safe in their roles. Safety is a result of trusting environments and relationships and has been widely recognized as an essential step in personal fulfillment since Abraham Maslow’s “A Theory of Human Motivation” (Maslow, 1943). The researcher observed that trust among participants worked in three ways throughout this project: relational trust, procedural trust, and shared purpose. Youth had a tendency to lean on one another for affirmation and support. The ice cream social at the start of the research represented only one of several activities that the group does together to build relationships and trust outside of regular meetings.

During the six-month research period, the group planned trips to watch an interactive dinner theatre show, to a ski slope, to an escape room, to a chili supper and auction, and to a monthly movie night. The club pays the cost of the events as part of their dues each year. All of this serves as a way to encourage the individuals in the group to feel part of the group, and to build mentorships and role models between the older members of the group and the younger members of the group.

It's pretty important, it's more of a bonding, you get to know the person outside the meeting, a lot of kids are shy in the meeting, but when you get out on a much less professional scale, I think that really helps the pressure and helps them open up. (Hope, personal communication, March 14, 2019)

Jackie said, “And then they open up to you. they get more comfortable around you,” and Selena added, “Like warming up to you. I was super shy, and meeting new people helps boosts your confidence. I was shy because I didn't know anyone, now I'm one of the leaders” (personal communication, March 14, 2019). In this participant group,
younger members see older members in a positive role and mimic their values, which helps the group maintain sustainable membership. Hope cited taking care of the younger generation as an important issue, “Issues that are important to me have to do with the younger generation and what they have to go through. I look forward to issues which bring unity in the future” (personal communication, October 11, 2018).

The team building that occurs outside of formal meetings leads the group to be more cohesive during formal meetings and tasks. Youth spoke of the value of these trips in the final interview; the youth overwhelmingly responded that they feel like it is okay to fail. Jackie said, “I feel like you need to be confident if you fail, you need to be confident and get right back up and say, ‘Yeah, I did fail, but I'm trying to fix what I did’” (personal communication, March 14, 2019). Susan echoed this in her final interview.

That is what they need to learn, that they are not going to agree with everyone and just create more trust. Disagreeing does not mean you can’t like each other; it just opens more opportunities for discussion and that is the piece that I want them to leave our group with. (Susan, personal interview, March 29, 2019)

Aside from safety, a peripheral outcome of building trust in a youth group is that it encourages the development of each individual. Through discussion, youth hear varying perspectives that challenge how they think, which leads to a stronger self-awareness, a shared group identity, and a commitment to each other. One example emerged when some of the younger members expressed fear that certain plants in the garden would attract bees, which they did not want. After hearing from some of the older members, and eventually from the partners, about the value of bees in the ecosystem, the young participants were able to see the garden in a way that they had not before. As
individuals find their voice and values, it allows for growth within a group and promotes a higher level of collaboration.

The procedural norms coupled with the individual and group trust building leads to a safe environment for youth. Youth feel heard and are then more apt to engage in solving problems. From here, youth are on a trajectory of empowerment.

Empowerment for me means having the ability to understand that putting yourself in a situation that makes you nervous or concerned about how it's going to go isn't always a bad thing. You need to put yourself in those situations where it might be a little stressful, but when you come out on the other end, you're going to be very proud of yourself. You're going to be more confident, and just be more ready to be more empowered. It builds character. (Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

A final element of trust building was between the youth and the participant researcher. Youth were skeptical of the researcher’s involvement. The researcher represented someone outside of their circle, so building trust between the youth and the researcher was essential to get them to move forward.

They kind of had to build trust with you in the get go which is why we had to trudge through. It’s not personal, but because you were someone from the outside, and they needed to trust that they weren't going to come up with a big idea and that you were going to leave them hanging, but once they realized that you were in this for the long haul, and that every time you said you were going to do something, you came back the next month and it was done and that's when they were like, let's get this done, they noted this in our officer's meeting by saying that we should just put [the researcher] on the agenda every month. So, it just became kind of an natural part of our meeting, which I think they appreciated greatly. (Susan, personal communication, March 29, 2019)

The team building strategies that the group uses are important to having cohesive groups, Susan summed it up, “we just we provide them with many opportunities let them know that we are equal. We are all in this together” (personal communication, October 22, 2018).
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH: Theme Three

*Through its emphasis on communication, access to assets, helping youth get assistance from others, and building and maintaining momentum, YPEM helped students gain access to the halls of power, leading one youth member to conclude: “It is easier to get the city to do something than I thought.”*

Of great importance to this participant group’s project process were open communication lines between the members of the group, the mentor, the researcher, and partners. The process was heavily reliant on electronic communication and between-meeting communications. Throughout the six-month research process, over 75 email messages, text messages, and social media announcements were made to keep those involved in the project abreast of project timelines and needs. Without the infrastructure and a communication process, the momentum of those involved would likely slow. This is a notable theme because Phelps County is an atypical region. The town of Rolla has great access to these systems; whereas, just fifteen miles out, where some of the youth families reside, the lack of communication infrastructure would present a barrier to the process of empowerment.

Rolla is the central hub of the county so the resources available to collaborate with the youth on this project were abundant. This made a difference throughout the process, beginning with the initial interview with Susan.

*We have a lot of resources to provide, but unfortunately not everyone knows of them. Being able to make connections and then have the ability to provide the needed information or to get to that resource. I think that is a challenge. (Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)*

As the group worked to design and build the native agronomy garden, it was not difficult for youth members to list people or entities that might be willing to help them achieve their goal. The project allowed the youth to interact with members of local
government including the City Planner and the Director of Parks and Recreation. This helped youth participants to see government at work and learn about citizenship. Bre said, “It is easier to get the city to do something than I thought, you can go into city hall and ask how to do it and they are very helpful and seem to want people to do things for the community” (personal communication, March 14, 2019).

A strategy that the team relied heavily upon to gain and support partnerships was open communication. Not only do youth need to feel confident to communicate within the group, but also the mentor, researcher, partners, and youth must have an easily accessible way to communicate in order to share ideas, project timelines, project processes, and needs. YPEM suggests that groups build a relationship with partners and mentors by identifying, engaging, observing, supporting, and sustaining them. This process requires open lines of communication in order to evolve from recognizing youth voice to making change. Open communication requires confidence, and like other themes that emerged in this participant group, confidence is established through a combination of other attributes and stages.

Once the group decided to design and build a garden as its project focus, Hope asked the group to begin to identify potential partners within the community. With the help of parents as guides on the side, the group generated a list including Bray Conservation Area, Department of Natural Resources, the local school district, the local university (Missouri S&T), the Agricultural Science program, and Design Academy at the Rolla Technical Institute. As the focus narrowed, the youth participants added more partners to the potential list including the local office of the Parks and Recreation Department, the city planner, and a couple of organizations that could offer guidance on
soil, planting, and care of the garden. Financial partners emerged through Farm Bureau, the Missouri Farmers Association, and the state 4-H grant. Youth began to experience YPEM stages three and four, which are the stages where youth participants engaged more with the planning and vision of the garden. During this phase, they made a few trips to potential planting sites and discussed further details involved in the project. This is when some of the younger members of the group began to speak up. Jackie visualized an archway with the Elk Prairie 4-H Butterfly Garden sign; Jackie mentioned vines growing and referenced a visit to the Missouri Botanical Gardens. Selena said that they should call it something other than butterfly garden since they could add a lot of other plants and things. Susan suggested using the word Agronomy in some way and the youth liked that a lot. Hope suggested that the craft team could make butterfly houses and maybe stepping-stones for a path through the garden with the interpretive signs. Susan said that the group should contact Carol at local Missouri Farm Association because she could help with education and possibly donate seeds. Hope said she would contact her and invite her to the March meeting since she has to talk to her about other issues. The group also brainstormed a plan B. Selena suggested the wooded area behind the firehouse. Hope reiterated the need to get the city plans for the land and the future expansion of the Acorn Trail (personal communication, March 14, 2019). In the early stages, many of the youth who spoke up during the initial site visit were not very vocal, so this participation was a change that occurred as the group worked toward its goal.

Without the connections, partnerships do not happen, and Susan sees partnerships as a powerful tool to building community leadership. Susan discussed embedding partnerships into the club’s mission.
We always insist that our youth go with us into the community to ask for these partnerships, which is another leadership skill. We have them walk through all of the processes. Who could help us, and how could they help us? What did they do for us that does not take money? Is there something they could do for us that isn't a financial burden for them? (Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

She expressed that giving youth responsibility for leadership and walking them through the process of gaining assistance from others builds confidence in the members and she noted that she could see growth in individuals with each year of participation in the group (personal communication, October 22, 2018).

ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH: Theme Four

Peer-to-peer role models, adult mentoring, and community engagement helped youth confidently tackle the native agronomy garden--the group’s community heritage project.

In this participant group, these mentorships grew from within, coupling older youth members with younger members. Youth also demonstrated reliance on trusting mentorships with adults. It is customary for a parent, and sometimes two parents, to accompany each youth member to the meeting. The parents often provide input freely during discussion sessions. Parents also serve a role in nudging, encouraging, and correcting youth regarding procedures. “No, you have to provide time for discussion after a motion is seconded before calling for a vote” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Parents will even encourage their child to “speak louder” or “make a motion.” The presence of adults had a positive modeling impact on manners and posture.

Youth readily identified people who could help them to fix a problem that they saw. The group members listed “teachers, leaders,” “friends, adults,” “police, fire department, ambulance,” and “people in the media” as people who would help youth with
solving a community problem (Elk Prairie 4-H Club, Youth Focus Group). Group members conveyed that they have had experiences with adult leaders in their lives. When asked what strategies they have learned from mentors, Cheryl replied, “Confidence and self-esteem.” Bre said, “My teachers at school teach me about how to set expectations in my life.” These responses evolved into conversation about change making. Youth responded that their role models help them to make changes possible. “Definitely make sure everyone's voice is heard and everybody’s opinion is heard,” Mia said. “There’s a really good opportunity for kids that are kind of shy in front of whole bunch of people, and they’ll have a voice that will be heard in one way or another.” Selena said, “I think you’ll show maybe we’ll have interest in our kids learning and growing more, because we are showing we are leaders also” (personal communication, October 11, 2018).

The strong presence and modeling of adults and intra-group mentorships serve an important role. Susan places great value on the age variance of the group.

Our kids always have a peer that is older than them. [The older youth] have had some life experiences that may be similar to what the younger child is struggling with, and for youth, it is always better to hear advice from another child than to hear it from an adult. The variety of backgrounds brings a lot of different experiences, and it also brings a lot of different opportunities within our core club. (Susan, personal communication, March 29, 2019)

The opportunity to be with older youths benefits the younger members by helping to build confidence, which aids in development of leadership skills.

As a 4-H leader, my main issue is to try to provide an opportunity for our youth to excel as youth and to be able to learn those abilities to work together, but to also be a leader individually to learn things that you might not pick up inside your home. Certainly, opportunities that you're going to learn outside with a group, I also think being a leader is something that has to be learned. It has to be modeled and it has to grow over time. And I think the reason that it works so well in our organization is because every child has a job has a has a role to lead and even the youngest can lead. So,
you know you need a little more guidance and then a little less guidance
and a little less guidance and you know now our officer team runs the
meeting completely on their own. You know they send me items for the
agenda I do type it for them out of convenience, but I think the leadership
role will support them in their professional world in their personal world
(Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

A typical young person spends most of their structured time in a seat learning
theories of the world. When it comes to civics, they learn about the structure of
government and community, but experiencing those ideas outside of school helps young
people to see that they are capable of being part of the conversation in their community.
To help young people broadcast their voice means working with community partners to
experience how a process works in practice. This is the heart of participatory action
research. In this participant group, the researcher observed that as youth connected to
community partners and local government, they became more confident that they would
be listened to.

The group was interested throughout the project in gaining sustainable members
through their community heritage preservation and education mission. In the process of
connecting with the local Master Naturalists and Gardeners groups, they began to realize
that their partnership would also serve as a way for those groups to engage young people
so that they also could sustain membership, which is the essence of empowerment. And
so, the cycle goes, when youth are connected to community and civic organizations, they
are more likely to sustain interest in being involved in those ways throughout life.

I think [their involvement] also speaks to that empowerment for all in the
organization. I mean we have kids right now who are investing every free
moment to make us better even though in the next year or two they're no
longer going to be in the age range [to be in the group], it's just important
for them to do it and to do well, so that the club can have something to
build from. And I would even say by extension having the youth involved
with the master naturalists and gardeners would prompt an interest for the
youth growing up and being part of that as well. So that's a sustainability piece from their perspective. It goes back to growing your own. (Susan, personal communication, March 29, 2019)

Susan reported that citizenship is embedded in the core values of 4-H, and that the engagement that happens at a young age impacts the way citizens interact with their community over time.

The group must have the ability to work together as a team. To be able to express needs and wants and allow yourself to be led. Instead of approaching a task as you know everything, you use all of your resources to work together as a team. (Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

Community is integral to citizenship and it “involves a large group of partnerships” (Elk Prairie 4-H youth group, Mentor interview, 2018). Once the members of the group were able to see that the process of change really relies upon the change maker being confident and assertive enough to ask how to make it happen, they were much more invested in the overall program. Elk Prairie 4-H youth group plays an important role in the community.

4-H serves a lot of purposes, we have the ability to reach a population of people with many backgrounds, so you don’t have to live in a rural environment, and you don’t have to have had any prior knowledge of the program. We have a mission that we’re going to work together for our club, our community, our country, and our world. (Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

That mission is actually the official pledge for the 4-H organization, and it is recited at the start of every formal meeting.

For young people to reach the stage of empowerment, according to Susan, the group has to have obstacles and failures, which helps them to build character, and compels people to exercise resilience and put themselves out there.
You need to put yourself in those situations where it might be a little stressful, but when you come out on the end, you're going to be very proud of yourself. You are going to be more confident and then just be more ready to be more empowered. It builds character. (Susan, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

Empowerment is the ultimate goal of the model, and it is only possible with solid community engagement. Problem-based learning, like this project, creates a foundation that encourages connected citizens. For the connection to be sustained, the group needs continual opportunities to connect with community. Members of the group began imagining long term improvements to the agronomy garden as they became more engaged. They began to envision educational programming with the local school district and with community educational resources. They spoke of potential fundraisers that they could do to grow the garden (personal communication, March 15, 2019). The interview with Susan gave an overall picture of a motivated, committed leader who values youth voice and leadership. She was knowledgeable about the community, its assets and barriers, and was aware of issues that leading a young group presents. Her commitment to the group has been a lifelong one, which gives her extra motivation to support the group and its mission.

ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH: YPEM Strategies

During the research period many strategies emerged as imperative for the growth and empowerment of this group. Table 8, summarizes those strategies.
### Effective Strategies for Participant Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procedural Norms</td>
<td>Following roll call, the youth leader conducts meetings. The youth officers sit at a table in front of the room, facing the youth, who sit intermingled with their parents. In the initial meetings, the youth participants and parents sat at tables in a row and facing the front of the room. The youth leader calls for reading of reports, secretary report, treasurer report; each has to have a motion to approve, a second to the motion and a full group vote to approve. This established routine helps the members to learn the norms, and to be in the habit of practicing them. Adult mentors sometimes aid in process from the side. For instance, if the youth leader forgets a step in the procedure, the mentor may say, “you need to allow time for discussion before taking a vote” or “this can be covered under old business.” Likewise, parents in attendance also help to encourage their child to make a motion, volunteer to lead one of the pledges, or second a motion” (personal communication, October 2018-March 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round Table Discussion</td>
<td>Youth sit in a circle to proceed with discussion. In this format, youth are encouraged to share without raising hands. Youth listen actively and respond in a way to advance the conversation. In this format, the younger members actively engage, as the power-distance of the leaders being at the front of the room is broken (personal communication, October 2018-March 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust Building</td>
<td>Youth and mentors plan monthly outings and movie nights in order to build the team trust and inner group mentoring: “It's pretty important, it's more of a bonding, you get to know the person outside the meeting, a lot of kids are shy in the meeting, but when you get out on a much less professional scale, I think that really helps the pressure and helps them open up” (Lea, personal communication, March 14, 2019).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“That's what they need to learn, that they are not going to agree with everyone and just create more trust. Disagreeing doesn't mean you can't like each other, it just opens more opportunities for discussion and that is the piece that I want them to leave our group with” (Susan, personal communication, Mach 2019).

**Planning Tools**

“Like when we make a picture and draw it out so that we can all have input” (Jackie, personal communication, March 14, 2019).

“Making the picture thing [collage] of all of the native prairie plants, you know that helped so that we could see how it might all look together” (Hope, personal communication, March 14, 2019).

“When we put the big paper on the wall and had ideas about what project we could do” (Selena, personal communication, March 14, 2019)

**Communication Process**

The process was heavily reliant on electronic communication and between meeting communication. Throughout six-month research process, over 75 email messages, text messages, and social media announcements were made to keep those involved in the project abreast of project timelines and needs (contact log).

**Family & Partner Engagement**

The group held a potluck Christmas dinner for families and potential partners. The group sat with family and community people and discussed 4H and events that they are involved in (personal communication, December 13, 2018).

The youth are well versed in manners, introductions, hand shaking, eye contact and conversation with the older participants in the potluck. Adults control conversations and the youth tend to mimic the mannerisms and jokes that they tell. (personal communication, December 13, 2018)

The group places great value on informal dinner conversations. They host chili suppers and ice cream socials as a way to interact with others in the community. Even in reimagining ways to engage community in a project, they revisited these strategies (personal communication, October 2018 – March 2019).
“If we're going to re-start this, I feel we should have like a big kind of like how we have the chili super and invite like a lot of the surrounding clubs, and the FFAs and get even more input. (Bre, personal communication, March 14, 2019).

“I think possibly participation in our community. Just because we are such a college town and a lot of our people come to college and then they leave. But I think if we could get more participation, we need to voice more battles or put on more activities, like chili supper, or put on some more just fun activities in the summer. That could really help get people involved in the community (Hope, personal communication, March 14, 2019).

“Like the St. Pat's parade, we could be in that, and maybe in the summer go to the park and have public picnics, invite people” (Jackie, personal communication, March 14, 2019).

ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH: YPEM and Overall Reflections

Both the mentor and the youth focus group reflected upon the process of YPEM in post-intervention interviews. Each member studied YPEM, discussed it, and reported thoughts regarding the implementation cycle. With this insight, along with observation notes, the researcher noted that, for this participant group, the stages of action research served as a helpful guide to build a program of empowerment. Youth reviewed the stages and steps and were able to articulate their actions for the processes.

I think we've touched everything because as a club that is what we do, we help out. The individual, it took everyone's thoughts and perspective to help them with this project. (Elk Prairie 4-H youth group, Focus Group interview, 2019)

While the components of the model proved useful, the steps did not occur in a nice sequential order. Instead, the group was often touching on components of two stages at once. The nonlinear, multi-dimensional qualities of the model are not reflected in the
nicely designed sequence presented in chapter two of this research. The ability to jump from stage to stage was a definite benefit to the project action.

I love the being able to be fluid through it, it is what made the project successful. If you can loosen the buckles a little and not be so stringent on exact guidelines at a certain time. Sometimes you can face one problem while you are trying to swim through another one. That's helpful. (Elk Prairie 4-H youth group, personal communication, 2019)

Another component to consider embedding in the model is youth empowerment education for parents and mentors. It would be helpful to provide strategies for parents and mentors, who sometimes step in for “the best interest of youth” to step back and recognize the power in the process of youth input. In this participant group, because parents actively participate in meetings, they may not recognize how their presence sometimes becomes a crutch for their child. By researching and including strategies for adults, and building those into the model, this group may have even chosen to find out why the outdoor classroom was unsafe and designed and implemented a solution to that problem. Alternatively, they may have come to their own conclusion about the safety concerns of the project and would not have mentioned it in the final interview.

By establishing norms, building trusting relationships, having peer and adult mentors, establishing and maintaining partnerships, youth were able to view project through from initial development of an idea to the end. Hope said, “I took away that no matter the situation, there's always something you can do about. Whether it's big or small, there's always something we can do” (personal communication, March 14, 2019).
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

CASE STUDY SIX: BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a) a community heritage, or b) social justice need among a variety of demographic groups across the United States. This sector was one of a suburban area north of St. Louis, Missouri.

BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: Participants and Process

Berkeley Middle School was a sixth through eighth grade middle school in the Ferguson-Florissant School District located in North County of St. Louis, Missouri with approximately 300 students. The student council has ten members from all three grades. The mentor/sponsor is the sixth grade Math teacher. The president of the organization, an eighth grader, was not involved in this venture as her parents felt that she already had enough on her plate. Also, attendance and participation were spotty, so for this study the group consisted of six members ranging in age from eleven to thirteen: one eighth grader, two seventh graders and three sixth graders. In our research, this group was the youngest group.

The mentor, Misty, was the Sixth-Grade Math teacher and sponsor for the student council. This was her second-year teaching at the school and as the sponsor. She was responsible for overseeing the group and planning activities for them. At the onset, she was extremely excited about the prospect of the research. The researcher conducted pre-intervention interviews with the mentor and the participants. The mentor was helpful in both setting up interviews and in collecting consent forms from students. However, as
the process progressed, the mentor was not there for the majority of the meetings. This may have been due, in part, to the unusual relationship of the researcher to the mentor and the group. The researcher was also a teacher in the school and, when present, allowed for the mentor to not be present and still meet the district guidelines for after-school groups. The mentor felt passionately about student voice, engagement and empowerment but struggled with strategies to attain that.

Well it was just so awesome that you would hold the meetings and just kind of not tell them what they need to do to keep them on track to come up with a great product. Because I know I’m not that good at doing things. I love supporting them but coming up with those ideas not my strong suit. Having you to come up with that idea and the support behind it and then just having the kids get on board and was like hey you’re doing it. I’m down. OK we’re doing it. So just getting the support was the best thing. (Misty, personal communication, March 26, 2019)

The district was going through a redistricting process that would eliminate this middle school along with its high school and numerous feeder elementary schools. Students in the school did not live in the Berkeley community; they came from surrounding neighborhoods. Because of this, very few students could walk to school; instead, they rode buses. In Figure 5, the feeder elementary schools for Berkeley Middle (18) were Airport(1), Holman(10), Cool Valley(6), and Bermuda(2). These elementary schools were not the elementary schools closest to the middle school. The middle school was also not the closest middle school to the high school it fed into. The following year the school, along with some of its feeder schools and its high school, were closed and students were consolidated into Ferguson Middle School and McCluer High School (see Figure 5). Berkeley Middle School was classified as an At-Risk school for the state of Missouri. (Ferguson-Florissant School District, 2019.).
As stated, the student council is made up of nine members; however there were difficulties in obtaining consent forms and parental permission forms from all of the group. This was due, in part, to the uncertainty within the school around the redistricting. The initial meetings and pre interview only had three students present. As the project progressed, more students attended, and permission slips came in.

The group chose to address community climate as their issue. They felt that

Figure 5. Consolidation of Ferguson Middle School and McCluer High School
“bullying” was a problem within the school. This school has a reputation within the district for having numerous fights and discipline issues. The group defined “bullying” by stating that students and staff alike were not positive or encouraging in their words or actions toward other members of the school community. They arrived at this first by discussing issues they felt were present in the school and their neighborhoods and second by collecting data on the number of negative to positive statements they heard within different settings throughout the school. Their results were collected by observation within the school over a one-week period. They observed that there was a seven to one ratio in negative to positive statements. They decided to attempt to change that ratio to a one to ten ratio of negative to positive statements. This case study will attempt to document how YPEM helped in facilitating this goal.

Three themes were derived from analysis of data collected from pre- and post-interviews with both the mentor and the participants, observations from the meetings held from January through March, and other interactions with participants and the mentor. It is important to note that the group chose to carry on implementation of their plan until May of 2019, beyond the research end date. The first theme was community and citizenship. The group felt a definite disconnect between their neighborhood communities and their school community. The second to emerge was trust and safety. The students have experienced trauma throughout their lives, some of which they discussed within the research. The third theme was strong youth leadership, which emerged because of the lack a focused committed mentor. Although the mentor had the best of intentions, other issues pulled her away from the group. These themes are noted in more detail below.
BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: Theme One:

The physical location of the school outside the boundaries of their home community reinforced a feeling of disconnect among youth and teachers and created a relational deficit that had to be overcome through YPEM process.

Both the mentor and participants viewed the school community as separate from what they termed their own community or neighborhood.

So, for me there’s two different communities. The community of my job and that is being with other teachers and students and really trying to build our school community. Not so much at home with my neighbors and people who live around in my home community. (Misty, personal communication, December 18, 2018)

For the students this was evident initially in the interviews and then in their discussion of issues that they wanted to address. At the start of the project, three main ideas emerged from the brainstorming of issues, two within the school and one in the community. They opted for one of the school issues “because a neighborhood issue would be too difficult to coordinate and other people already were dealing with it” (Chi, personal communication, February 20, 2019). The separation was also present in their determination of partners to include. The group did not include community/neighborhood groups or even the PTO among the partners that they felt would be helpful in their efforts. When brainstorming partners at Stage 2, they decided to only include the Staff of Berkeley Middle School (student council group, personal communication, February 27, 2019). In the final interviews, the same separation was also evident. Students still talked discretely about their neighborhoods and the school. Chay’s comment about the roles they played exemplified this, “We served as leaders in our community. Well in this school” (personal communication, March 26, 2019). This separation of communities was present
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

throughout the stages of YPEM and exhibited itself in the issue that they chose, their common purpose, citizenship, and trust building.

As neither the participants nor the teacher lived in the neighborhood where the school was located, their feeling of citizenship was separated across two distinct communities. The fact that the school was not physically a part of their community likely reinforces this feeling of disconnect. YPEM, citizenship is introduced during the study stage, but youth actually spoke more of citizenship in their pre-interview than post, and they addressed citizenship in two different communities. This separation of communities made empowerment more difficult for the group.

BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: Theme Two

As group members, some as young as 6th grade, turned their focus to bullying, campus climate, and how to increase positive communication, they strengthened trust, safety and collaboration.

“Safety” was a recurring theme throughout the project for the youth. There was an overarching theme of safety, or the lack of it, and quality of life that came up in all of their interviews and in their choice of an issue to address for this research. This was evident in statements such as Chay’s,

It’s important that we have a safe environment that we feel like we can step outside our door and go play around the street and talk to our friends without being like someone is going to come around and hurt us.”(Chay, personal communication, February 6, 2019)

Once the group began working through YPEM this theme of safety reemerged. When the group brainstormed issues, although diverse, they all tied back to a sense of safety. Mark was focused on pets in the neighborhood and their safety, whereas Chay focused more on safety and trust issues involving people. The final choice for an issue
was “bullying,” defined as how community members spoke to each other, negatively or positively. For this group, safety was important for all members. It was not just the events of the Michael Brown incident within their neighborhood that affected students. Students were already vulnerable and lacking trust because of the transient nature of the political and social climate within the school district. The Berkeley and Kinloch neighborhoods were annexed into the district in 1975. In 2004, the district closed Berkeley High School and built McCluer-South Berkeley High. During the annexation Frost Elementary was repurposed as Berkeley Middle School. The students living in Kinloch and the neighborhoods around the airport were sent to Berkeley Middle School. Students at this time are taken out of their local neighborhood to a school where they drive past another district middle school to attend Berkeley. Through the community building within the school, students had started to build trust and engagement within the school. The district then chose to close the school against the recommendation of the local community. Students were then struggling throughout this research time with the uncertainty of their educational placement for the following year. The lack of presence by the student council president and mentor were direct results of this uncertainty. Both were engaged in pursuing possibilities for the following year. For instance, the president’s parents did not want her participating in this study, because she needed to focus on endeavors that would help her get admitted into a private school. This left the group to pull together and learn to trust through collaboration. When interviewed, this discussion of safety and trust were reflected in the responses dealing with collaboration and civility. Collaboration was referred to heavily throughout the interviews and the group members valued this throughout the process. Chay, Chi and Kenzie both talked
about collaboration and being able to rely on each other and mentors in the final interview. “By letting us have someone to talk to and to have someone to rely on and to talk about it” (Chay, personal communication, March 29, 2019). “Yes, I think collaboration because we have to collaborate with teachers and let them know what was going on and what idea we had and what we was thinking about doing” (Kenzie, personal communication, March 29, 2019).

And we all, put into the project instead of one person did it. And even though we might have had disagreements on certain things. We still work together as a group to figure out how we can make it work. (Chi, personal communication, March 29, 2019)

This sense of collaboration was integral to building trust, confidence and youth voice within the group. The issue of safety emerged again in the post-interview with Ton-Ton in response to the question about what could be addressed in the future. “Violence, because a lot of people get hurt doing violence and some people don’t like that. It hurts their feeling. It is not safe” (Ton-Ton, personal communication, March 27, 2019).

BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: Theme Three

Youth leadership emerged as they gained a sense of ownership of the project focus (“bullying”) and YPEM process, despite minimal involvement of the teacher mentor and uncertainty in the face of the school’s impending closure.

Leadership was shared throughout the meetings. The defined leader of the student council, the president was not involved in this research. This led to different members of the group taking on the leadership role at different times throughout the process. The first interview and meeting were confined to just a few members; it was not until about halfway through the process that the group as a whole took ownership and attended on a regular basis. As the meetings progressed, different leaders emerged for
each of the meetings. This was exciting to watch, as much of the group was comprised of sixth graders. These younger participants blossomed in the leadership roles. For some it was their first chance to take this role in a group. Because of this the focus would switch from meeting to meeting, but overall this allowed for diverse styles and perspectives to be highlighted throughout the process. Kenzie commented on this in the final interview, “We worked together as a group helped. Because like, we all had different parts in the group to do and different parts. We each brung it altogether at the end.” (Kenzie, personal communication March 29, 2019) It led to each member feeling that they could take a leadership role. Chay’s statement in the final interview highlighted this combined sense of leadership and collaboration. “We served as leaders in our community. Well in this school.” (Chay, personal communication, March 29, 2019) The “we” was telling in that she again acknowledged that sense of collaboration.

Although the group saw success in their project, they struggled from a lack of sustained mentorship throughout. This group because of their age and maturity level were developing their voice. The minimal mentorship worked to force the youth to step up and speak out, something that is sometimes difficult for younger youth. The minimal mentorship also made focus and clarity more challenging. The researcher had to step in and facilitate many times. The uncertainty of the school community affected the mentorship in this group, because the school was closing, and the mentor was not a tenured teacher. She was not sure what her position would be the next year. She was committed to completing the year with the youth, but long-term commitment was uncertain, and, in the end, she took a position at another school ending her relationship with the group. It was exciting however to watch the growth in youth voice and
engagement for this group as they progressed through the YPEM process. Their choice of strategies and leadership styles was interesting to watch.

BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: YPEM Strategies

YPEM encourages the use of multiple strategies throughout the process to help encourage and empower youth. Within this group, numerous strategies were used as noted in Table 9.

Table 9

*Effective Strategies for Participant Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Listening</td>
<td>Students brainstormed and reflected to refine their project choice (personal communication, February 27, 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Strategies we used was listing things and listening. Putting yourself into others shoes, like when they say stuff” (Ton-Ton, personal communication, March 29, 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Goal Planners</td>
<td>Group used smart goal planners to organize thinking. (personal communication, (February 27,2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group used smart board to document and preserve ideas (personal communication, February 20, 27, March 6, 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Y’all helped us. Well you helped me. Cause like you all helped me break it down so I could make it. Break it down into steps” (Alice, personal communication, March 29, 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus/Delta</td>
<td>Group created plus/delta chart and utilized this technique (personal communication, March 6, 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group created plus/delta chart at the end of the first meeting (personal communication, February 20, 2019)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnerships

“We had a thing where we invited the staff to come in and we talked about bullying” (Chay, personal communication, March 29, 2019)

“...to collaborate with teacher and let them know what was going on and what idea we had and what we was thinking about” (Kenzie, personal communication, March 29, 2019)

Youth-Led

Chi led February 20th meeting, Alice and Jakari led February 27th meeting, Kenzie led March 12th meeting

“When we had that meeting here when they were all sharing all of their concerns with the staff. It was so cool because we were able to take what they were doing and what they saw their need and their concern was. Implemented it and implemented it in our classrooms and even into the lunchroom (Misty, personal communication, March 26, 2019

BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: YPEM and Overall Reflections

The overall format of YPEM was useful in helping to create youth voice, engagement and empowerment in this group. Although we did not use every strategy provided, we utilized most of them. The group found the active listening, plus/deltas, organizers, partnerships, and student led meetings to be the most helpful. We were at stage four when the research window ended, but had already started to see changes in youth attitudes to civic engagement, change, and collaboration. Safety and trust were very important to this group. The group itself took ownership of trust building and facilitated open active listening throughout the project. Collaboration and controversy with civility were also important to the group and they worked to maintain it throughout.

The plus/deltas and voting helped with giving the group structures to build upon.

Structure was one of the limiting factors for this group as the mentorship was weak. The implementation process was also more cyclical than originally thought. The process was reminiscent of a scientific method or engineering process, where there is a recommended
flow for reporting, but a more chaotic process in implementation. You need all of the parts, but they don’t have to be completed in the order laid out. YPEM worked in the same way. It made a nice structure, but application was more fluid. Because groups are made of individuals the process had to be adapted to meet the individual needs of the group and their place in the flow. This group was focused more on voice and engagement. Alice’s statement in response to the question “Do you think you have a better idea about how to make something happen in your community now? “Yes, um I don’t want to say protest, but like the type of protest where you find a way to get your words somewhere. You find somebody to talk to, to cause change.” (Alice, personal communication, March 29, 2019).

CONCLUSION

YPEM highlighted the importance of courage, risk taking, communication, collaboration, partnerships, family, and experience to connect youth to resources and skills that will allow them to make changes within their community. Table 10 is a quick reference to the themes across all sites. It shows variations that support that those working with youth in communities must exercise cultural competence. Each community is unique and those working with youth must be cognizant of the community expectations and values. The youth in these six sites identified a community heritage or social justice need. Some of the groups chose to begin with heavy topics that were of most importance in their lives. Others chose to focus on a specific project that would aid in education, inclusion, and preservation of heritage.
Table 10

Cross-Reference of Emergent Themes Across all Six Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navajo Youth</th>
<th>United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme One: Youth/Young adult participants were ready and able to fill an adult leadership vacuum.</td>
<td>Theme One: A strong culture and a consciousness of self as connected to the tribal community supports native youth voice, fosters common purpose, and creates youth-led change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Two: Youth leaders created a positive communication environment by focusing on civility, conflict resolution, and self-awareness.</td>
<td>Theme Two: For UNITY participants, intergenerational collaboration recognized youth as having significant roles within the community through respect and confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Three: Youth leaders facilitated an exploration of community within the context of loss.</td>
<td>Theme Three: Through their efforts to create a food pantry, participants discovered that action is a strategy for acknowledging trauma and catalyst for empathy and empowerment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. An understanding of community required Navajo youth to think deeply about their place and the issues embedded in their day-to-day life.  
2. An understanding of community required Navajo youth to grapple with a history of cultural loss.  
3. An understanding of “community” helped Navajo youth understand traditional perspectives with the night sky and share the perspectives with others. |
Theme Four: The UNITY members recognized that peer to peer collaboration and well-informed community members, enhanced buy in for change.

Theme Five: Parallel engagement at the local level (through YPEM implementation) and national level (through participation in national meetings, symposiums, and summits in Washington DC) facilitated youth empowerment.

Jovenes de Justicia Social

Theme One: Vulnerability, relatability, and relevance created a basis for authentic engagement and grounded YPEM in issues that mattered to youth participants.

Theme Two: Storytelling was a process of constructing personal narratives that embedded youth in painful societal issues and deepened group interactions.

Theme Three: Regardless of their actual citizenship status, YPEM process helped youth develop strong sense of identities.

Theme Four: Even as a trust exercise, YPEM empowered undocumented youth to form a cohesive group, realistically assess issues and opportunities, and take courage, thus increasing their capacity for future action.

Ferguson Youth

Theme One: Adult mentors provided emotional support and a resource rich environment ensuring that youth felt confident as they navigated the ups and downs of YPEM process.

Theme Two: Ferguson youth demonstrated differing levels of youth leadership involvement and expertise, but because youth members saw themselves as part of the process that they understood and supported in the absence of strong leaders they were able to step in and lead effectively.

Theme Three: Partnerships designed to meet the youth’s emotional and logistical needs were essential in empowering youth to address social justice issues in their community.

Elk Prairie 4-H Youth Group

Theme One: Youth had limited opportunity to cultivate authentic voice and self-directed engagement because of the formality of procedures, a tendency for parents to overrule youth suggestions, and the emergence of a “group think” mindset among youth participants after brainstorming. However, the formal process did create structure and clear expectations
for behavior and group members did articulate an abstract understanding how to handle disagreement.

Theme Two: Parallel involvement in YPEM process and fun group activities led to trust, confidence, cohesiveness, and the courage to persevere despite failure.

Theme Three: Through its emphasis on communication, access to assets, helping youth get assistance from others, and building and maintaining momentum, YPEM helped students gain access to the halls of power, leading one youth member to conclude: “It is easier to get the city to do something than I thought.”

Theme Four: Peer-to-peer role models, adult mentoring, and community engagement helped youth confidently tackle the native agronomy garden—the group’s community heritage project.

Berkeley Student Council

Theme One: The physical location of the school outside the boundaries of their home community reinforced a feeling of disconnect among youth and teachers and created a relational deficit that had to be overcome through YPEM process.

Theme Two: As group members—some as young as 6th grade turned their focus to bullying, campus climate, and how to increase positive communication, they strengthened trust safety and collaboration.

Theme Three: Youth leadership emerged as they gained a sense of ownership of the project focus (“bullying”) and YPEM process despite minimal involvement of the teacher mentor and uncertainty in the face of the school’s impending closure.

Chapter five includes a discussion of the results presented in chapter four, and includes an updated version of the YPEM (YPEM 2.0). This new model reflects changes based on the data. The research team analyzed all emergent themes across the six demographic locations and found similarities for empowering youth. Table 11, provides observations that the researchers found to be essential components of YPEM.
Table 11

*Observations of Essential Components to the YPEM*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Essential Components of YPEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation One</td>
<td>Youth leadership. Strong youth leadership was essential to providing a process for moving from youth voice to engagement to youth empowerment. When youth leadership was lacking, direction was unfocused and common purpose and commitment suffered, leading to stagnant growth among youth participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Two:</td>
<td>Trust and safety were paramount to developing social change model theory attributes. Safety in space and relationships was foundational in developing youth’s sense of citizenship, power, and place within a community, which in turn empowered them to engage in social justice and heritage issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Three</td>
<td>Partnerships were essential to drive change in community and heritage settings in terms of emotional supports, motivation to engage, practical partnerships, and civic partnerships. Partnerships provided a flow of resources for youth participants between settings. When partnerships were fractured, progress in change was limited to people and relationships in the immediate organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Four:</td>
<td>Multi-dimensional mentorship (adult to peer, peer to peer, and intergenerational) provided youth with the structure, perspectives, and sense of safety necessary to empower youth to take risks for confronting social justice and community heritage issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative, participatory action research study was to examine how arming youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) to identify and engage a community heritage or social justice need would affect their perceptions and abilities to address such a need. The outcomes can assist the research community because the model is relevant in various settings. This chapter includes discussion of major findings as related to the literature on youth voice, engagement, and empowerment. Also included is a modified YPEM, researchers’ reflections on the process, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research. This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer these research questions:

Central question:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect youth and adult perceptions of the ability of youth to influence a) a community heritage, or b) social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. Does implementing YPEM affect the ability of youth and adult mentors to cultivate youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment as it relates to a community heritage or social justice issue?

2. Which aspects of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?
INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

The researchers chose the six groups to focus on disadvantaged populations and diverse cultures. In chapter three, we discussed some variation to the research process, but noted that presentation outcomes remained consistent, despite varying processes. The ability of the model to support difference in process illuminates the robust nature of the model by demonstrating how it can support multiple methods of implementation. As groups adopt the model, they have freedom to present it in a way that works best for the nature of the group. Four observations, which are explored in depth below, emerged.

Observation One: Youth leadership

*Strong youth leadership was essential to providing a process for moving from youth voice to engagement to youth empowerment. When youth leadership was lacking, direction was unfocused, and common purpose and commitment suffered, leading to stagnant growth among youth participants.*

Young people across the United States continue to rise as leaders within their communities, ready to be engaged in issues of justice and community development (Zimmerman, 2007). Among the six groups, leadership roles varied from having single identified leaders to more collaborative styles of leadership with fluidity in roles shared among youth throughout the process. When youth leaders were present and engaged, commitment was high, and the outcome led to meeting each group’s goals. Youth developed their voice, which led youth to feel valued, which, in turn, motivated engagement and facilitated change. In two of the six groups, a collaborative leadership style emerged from the group. In both cases, this was out of necessity due to the lack of adult mentor participation or lack of formal leadership roles among the youth participants. In the remaining groups, three had formal officers who were either
appointed, or elected through a democratic process. These delegated youth, led all meetings, and, in their absence, the group struggled to move forward. The remaining groups had single leaders who emerged naturally through the process because of their skill set and influence. These results support the findings that groups are successful with multiple leadership styles, as long as they are youth driven, led, and centered (Allaman & Powers, 2012). Since youth leadership is rarely based on attainment of power, but rather on change, it is easy to presume that fluid leadership styles would be successful (Abdullah et al., 2014). Many issues affected progress toward youth empowerment. One significant issue was adult influence on youth-led activities. During one case study, the over-involvement of adults shifted the vision of the youth, while in another group the adult interaction was absent leaving the youth to obtain leadership roles among themselves.

To echo the importance of cultural competence, youth who were more proficient in the English language, and youth with a strong cultural identity were more confident in their role as leaders. In addition, youth who had strong ties to other adults, like family, educators, or mentors, were more successful in leading the groups. It is important for youth to voice the issues that are important to them so that they can become catalysts for change (Allaman & Powers, 2012). To achieve success, youth need to exercise their voice and put plans into action. This cycle emphasizes the importance self-worth, development of positive relationship skills, and changes in attitude to support their achievement throughout their lives (Borden, Perkins, & Serido, 2011).
Observation Two: Trust and Safety

These two related concepts were paramount to developing social change model theory attributes. Safety in space and relationships were foundational in developing youth’s sense of citizenship, power, and place within a community, and empowering them to engage in social justice and heritage issues.

All six of the groups identified trust as essential. However, attaining trust toward the adult leaders was more difficult in five of the six groups. The rural community did not experience issues with establishing trust because of the overwhelming participation of family and adults. Due to the effect of traumatic experiences of many of these groups, trust building was imperative in reaching the goals during the empowerment process. Trauma influenced the youth’s ability to trust adults, each other, and the community that they lived in. Traumatic experiences varied across groups, but included whitewashed cultural identity, intergenerational trauma, violence within the community, systemic racism, lack of access to quality education, colonization, and racial cleansing. In the rural setting, parental fear, overprotection, and mistrust stood as obstacles to change. Current literature notes that, without cultural competence and acknowledgement of the importance of cultural healing, youth-led change is limited in its success (Zimmerman, 2007); therefore, researchers must be knowledgeable in issues that their youth face each day in order to support them and help them change communities at large.

Safety was a concern among many participants. Creating safe physical, emotional, and social spaces helped to cultivate the meaningful relationships needed, between youth and adults who supported youth in unpacking varying community contexts and social needs (Vaughan, 2014). The importance of safe space was relevant in all groups. Safe space referred to not only a physical space but also a figurative space where the youth felt safe enough to share their vulnerabilities. Research finds that setting
the right tone, which allows youth to value their differences, promote respect, and increase understanding, encourages youth to flourish. Creating safe spaces that are culturally responsive, free from racism, and honor diversity ensures that youth will be able to focus on change rather than insecurities (Allaman & Powers, 2012, Kwon, Nygreen, & Sanchez, 2006).

In five of the groups, a consistent physical space proved influential in creating a safe psychological space because it honored the youth as important and valuable to that community. For three of the six groups, the figurative space -- the ability to share common experiences without judgement -- did not need require physical space because of the emotional connections that arose through the process. For one particular group, creating a safe physical and psychological space were essential due to fear of deportation. Procedures to set up safe and secure environments addressed multiple tiers including adult interactions with youth, support for their endeavors, and the adults’ ability to meet their basic needs of shelter, food, safety, and emotional supports. Once the youth felt safe and built trust within the group, the process of empowerment moved forward.

The presence of trust and safety permitted youth participants to engage in risk taking that opened avenues for them to explore their feelings and maximize their potential to meet goals. With a safe space to fail, without judgement or further traumatization, confidence among participants began to grow. The development and consistent renewal of trust and the consistency of safe space allowed the youth to develop empathy and feel comfortable with moving forward in attempting to make change in uncomfortable situations (Kwon et al., 2006). Empathy was critical to increasing the success of the program outcomes and in building leadership capacity among the youth.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

themselves. Table 12 highlights evidence of growth within each of the six case studies.

The researcher included a quote from a member of the group prior to the implementation
of YPEM and a follow up quote after the implementation of YPEM to highlight how
attitudes and perceptions evolved through the process.

Table 12

*Evidence of Growth during Research Period*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Statements of Growth Pre-Intervention</th>
<th>Post-Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Navajo Youth| Response to: If you had the power to change something in your community to make it a better place to live for everyone what would you like to change?  
“I can't really say because I don't participate. I would say the local government. Just based off what I know, they built that store for the shopping marketplace, and now he's talking about building a hotel. What I think would benefit us more is recycling station, a better trash system, and then also a place for our elders” (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, December 16, 2018). | Response to: Now that you are finished with your project, if you wanted to get something change in your community how would you start? What would you change to make it a better place for your community? What would you do to make it happen?  
“I never took the initiative to go that way because I guess you could say it is a little intimidating or there is this fear of rejection that you won't have your voice heard or anything. But after getting that feedback from this past chapter house meeting, I think it's possible to propose more projects to make a better place for my community” (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, March 22, 2019). |
| UNITY       | Response to: What role do you see youth playing in making community decisions?                       | Response to: Do you think you as an individual changed at all through this process? |
"Yeah, I feel like, I can't explain it. But it made me feel better, I guess. Because now that I have a stable income, I guess. I knew how it felt not having food, and stuff. So, it made me a better person. Because going through the process and learning more about how to do stuff. It made me more knowledgeable” (Faith, personal communication, March 23, 2019).

Response to: If you had the power to change something to make your community a better place, what would you like to change and how?

Jovenes de Justicia Social

“Let's use homeless people as an example. People build shelters for homeless people, you know, that's kind of like a way to help. Instead of raising money, you can do something like this for people in need” (Karen, personal communication, December 2018).

Response to: Now that we’ve finished this program, if you wanted to get something changed in your community, how would you start?

“OK we start off with the group. You know, start off like making a group or like a campaign or you could do something like get someone's attention… actually start a group with people that relate to what's going on or also that wants to support” (Karen, personal communication, March 2019).

Ferguson Youth

“When we talked about resources. I have a lot of resources and I've done a lot of networking over the past few years. And so, I think that would be the first thing I would do is reach out to the resources and talk and figure out what's the best thing what's the best way to attack it. And we can create a plan and go from there” (Leah, personal communication, November 21, 2018).

Response to: Now that you finished this program if you're wanting to get something changed your community. How would you start?

“Oh well first go to my executive director or those networks and I would just pitched the idea and say, ‘Look, you know, I had this idea and you know this is cool. And how would you go about it? Or if I was to put this together would you be able to help me with that at all.’ That'll be the first thing. Then if I was to find potential partners with that, I would do an outline. And that outline we would discuss it together and you know rough it out and see you know what we need to get done.
When does it need to be done by? Well... we need to put this together. And so, I would go from there and then from there we would just implement that outline. And at that timeline and just go through with it” (Leah, personal communication, March 19, 2019).

Elk Prairie 4-H Youth

Response to: What role do youth play in your community?

“They are not exactly taken seriously because they [adults] think we are too young and don’t think hard about things. They don’t take it seriously because they don’t think a little kid would do that” (Hope, personal communication, October 11, 2018).

Response to: What did you take away from this project?

“I took away that no matter the situation there’s always something you can do about it. Whether it’s big or small, there’s always something we can do” (Hope, personal communication, March 14, 2019).

Berkeley Student Council

Response to: What can you do to help?

“I can be myself, so I can agree and disagree respectfully either way with my neighbors about the community. I can just have trust in people” (Chay, personal communication, February 6, 2019).

Response to: What role did you play in planning and beginning this project?

“We served as leaders in our community. Well in this school and we made posters and we did a lot of things to get together” (Chay, personal communication, March 29, 2019).

Observation Three: Partnerships

*Partnerships helped to drive change in community and heritage settings in terms of emotional support and motivation to engage. Partnerships provided a flow of resources for youth in each setting. When partnerships were fractured, progress in change was limited to people and relationships in the immediate organization.*

One of the noticeable differences among the six participant groups was the availability of partnerships. In four groups, partnerships were strong, while one group reported limited partnerships, and one group did not benefit from any partnerships. The
research showcased in chapter two, revealed that partnerships between local businesses, adults, and community representatives proved to be assets when promoting change with youth. Additionally, having many people act in concert to achieve one goal creates a collective growth mindset. Collective action is a powerful bargaining chip. Partnerships in some cases were able to help accumulate resources or navigate tricky roads to achieve common goals. The systemic approach to developing strategies to engage and collaborate with citizens (especially youth) is integral to change in democratic societies. (Abdullah et al., 2014; Allaman & Powers, 2012; Sirianna, 2006).

Christens, Powers, and Zeldin (2013) found that themes of collaboration between adults and youth are becoming a regular occurrence in the new millennium because there are many benefits of such partnerships. The review of research revealed that regular interactions led to positive youth and civic development. These interactions, in turn, led to communities acting in democratic fashion to advocate for shared concerns of all participants. Christens and colleagues noted four core elements involving adult-youth partnerships: authentic decision-making, natural mentors, reciprocal activity, and community connectedness (Christens et al., 2013).

Strong partnerships opened opportunities for youth to reach their goals by providing assistance in meeting their physical, emotional, and structural needs. Adult leaders who embraced connections that met the needs of the youth were more successful than groups that had few connections. These partnerships provided resources, connections, education, support, and practical applications that supported the youth in their endeavors. This networking had a direct impact on the future of their project success. Groups with limited or no partnerships had limited success in achieving goals.
Observation Four: Multi-dimensional Mentorship

*Adult to peer, peer to peer, and intergenerational mentors provided youth with the structure, perspectives, and a sense of safety necessary to empower youth to take risks for confronting social justice and community heritage issues.*

Youth mentors were a driving force for success of the programming. Within the research groups, four groups had strong mentors who were present and available for youth participants. These mentors had extensive experience working with youth, prioritized being a youth mentor, and the role was a major part of their career, as compared to other mentors who had varying career or personal obligations. Strong mentors set up fundamental processes that encouraged youth voice and validated youth importance within meetings and events. These mentors listened more than they talked and then responded to what they heard. Other characteristics of strong mentors included encouraging trust through team building activities, providing recognition for youth members, and highlighting successes within the community. Two of the youth mentors provided a process for inclusion of youth voice, respectful communication styles, and transparent collaboration, which lead the youth to adopt a peer-mentoring model. Two groups had an adult mentor who was present, but not active in the process. Progress limited because of lack of confidence and commitment from these mentors. Youth were not empowered to invoke real change and direction was lacking. In one particular case, a researcher served as youth mentor due to the lack of interest from community leaders. Despite this dynamic, youth felt a sense of empowerment when mentors emphasized team building, trust development, and group facilitation skills.

The research team consulted existing studies that emphasized the responsibility of the mentor to help youth explore social issues and empower them to make changes. This
research helped inform the study. Positive adult relationships can provide youth with outlets to feel like they matter and are an important part of communities, which promotes their natural development (Borden, Perkins, & Serido, 2011; Keller, Liang, Noam, Rhodes, & Spencer, 2006; Kwon et al., 2006). Mentors should enable youth to find purpose in changing the world around them, and those who empower youth to be agents of change and serve as their allies in this mission, are far more successful than those who lead the group as adults. The mentor should set up processes that allow youth to lead, stimulate partnerships, be champions for youth interests, and build youth commitments toward common purposes (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Liang, Spencer, Rappaport, & West, 2013). Zimmerman (2007) echoed the importance of adult leaders, stating that adults need to support the youth agenda without abandoning them. She also stated that adult mentors should reflect on their own interactions and learn how to best relate to youth from these reflections. The researchers noted that peer-to-peer mentorship also was effective in engaging youth within the group. Experienced youth became mentors to newer members of the group. Using this enlightened information, the research team created a revised YPEM.
YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EMPOWERMENT MODEL 2.0

Figure 6. Youth Participatory Empowerment Model 2.0
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The team began this research with a mission to find an explanation and solution to the observed phenomenon that fractured communities across the United States are causing pain for citizens. We found that the pain that many communities experience is a direct result of disconnected citizens. We also found that a program to empower young citizens could have a strong impact on a positive cyclical change in engagement. When youth are empowered to lead, they are more likely to continue active engagement as they become adults, and more likely to encourage future generations to remain engaged (Borden et al., 2011). Young people have the most at stake in the future and they can provide a fresh look at problems and solutions for the world that they will inherit.

Given the opportunity to build a resilient leadership skill set, these young people have the power to become engaged in local and national conversations to change the world for the better. Research outlined in this study helped the researchers to build a model that encouraged youth and their mentors to identify and engage a community heritage or social justice need. Through this study’s methodology, themes and strategies emerged and these helped to improve a model that aids youth groups in the process of empowerment. Youth, and adults who work with youth, can use the model as a framework to identify needed changes and solve problems. This model can have great implications for practice, providing a tool to guide groups through various stages of action. The model suggests activities that support an empowerment sequence of building leadership skills identified through the SCM. Embedded in the SCM are values of consciousness of self, congruence and commitment. When youth understand and act on
their beliefs, values, and attitudes, their actions align. This leads them to solidify a commitment and emerge as youth leaders in their communities.

After evaluation and analysis of the implementation of YPEM across the six sites, the researchers concluded that there is great benefit in using the model when working with youth and that it is particularly helpful in communities with marginalized populations. The model has clear implications for practice; the implications are included in the following section.

Implication One: Scope and Sequence

The model serves the purpose of providing a scope and sequence that encourages empowerment. The idea of youth empowerment is not unique. Many programs and youth groups work toward this goal, but there exist limited models that assist mentors and youth leaders with a systematic process to plan a program. What is unique about YPEM is that it combines leadership attributes from the SCM to help individuals recognize their values and commitments. It also helps groups build skills to collaborate and disagree civilly and move into action to have an impact within communities. With the YPEM model, the leadership skills develop in an authentic real world, problem-based setting. The YPEM relies on the ability of youth leaders to activate the group and requires adult mentors to take a back seat and serve in an advisory role. The scope of YPEM, and the marriage of the SCM with the process of action and the pillars of the emergent themes, deliver a compelling process of empowerment.
Implication Two: Culture of Trust

The model provides guidance to aid in developing a culture of trust. In every participant group, trust was an absolute imperative to engagement. Youth are not inclined to voice ideas, opinions, or input of any kind if they feel they are going to be judged or put down. It is natural to for young people to feel inhibited around people who have not established trust with them. Relationship building helps to establish trust among youth members, between the mentor and youth, and with peripheral partners. YPEM addresses trust building at every stage of empowerment, and offers team building and trust strengthening activities in each phase of problem solving. Though groups often consider team building and trust building, YPEM recognizes that norms differ across a wide range of groups, and that trust building relies on culturally competent strategies. YPEM also places emphasis on the role of safety for youth, as youth who live in disengaged communities may not feel safe upon initial contact with a new group. YPEM has implications for use across a wide range of youth demographics because it is rooted in research, and tested with vastly different groups throughout the United States.

Implication Three: Youth Leadership

The model encourages a youth-led group that has an actively engaged mentor who guides from the side. An adult mentor needs to recognize his or her important role in the process of building youth empowerment. Through our case studies, we found that when youth have no support from an adult, they tend to struggle. Although youth leaders stepped up, participants thrived most when mentors were an active accountability checkpoint and resource. Mentors maintain a role in every stage of YPEM. While
providing information and knowledge, and finding ways to stimulate and cultivate growth in youth, mentors play a significant part in the move toward long lasting change. YPEM allows mentors and youth to maintain a healthy and strong relationship while navigating through the five stages. Mentors typically offer encouragement and help others to keep going. With attributes such as Consciousness of Self and Commitment as part of the model, this extra encouragement can go a long way. Adults and mentors have often gone through challenges and experiences and are able to relate to and support youth in a unique way. The research that informed YPEM, enables mentors to actively engage youth on their journey to empowerment and change.

Implication Four: Partnership Development

The model encourages solid partnerships to support youth leadership in activating community change. The benefits of collaboration between youth and adult partners is not only to those participants, but also adds value to the community. Effective adult-youth partnerships can highlight the characteristics of youth voice, engagement, and empowerment that drive YPEM, whether intentionally or not. The significance and need for strong partnerships is actively present in each stage of YPEM. The model has implications for partnerships that awaken unheard voices and result in citizen populations made up of more knowledgeable and committed individuals.

The marriage of the action sequence and strategies to build empowerment in conjunction with the SCM for leadership development is unique to this model. The results of the research project support the combination of the SCM attributes into the YPEM. Demonstration of the seven attributes of the SCM will lead to change when
combined with a program that builds empowerment. YPEM can work in various settings since cultural competence is embedded in the sequencing. Groups will benefit from cultivating and supporting youth leadership, providing a safe space of trust, connecting youth with partners, and building relationships with peer-to-peer and peer-to-adult mentors. To minimize youth risks, youth should have equal access to resources that will strengthen their leadership skills. By embedding leadership development strategies into the process of problem identification and solution, and into the sequencing of the empowerment model, the researchers acknowledge the essential need to cultivate those values in young leaders. All three levels of engagement from the SCM were evident in the research findings. The four emergent themes that the study revealed addressed growth on the individual, group, and societal level. Youth leadership involves youth embracing leadership skills within themselves individually, but also sharing these skills with others.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The researchers developed the YPEM framework and a guidebook of activities that support it, for the six focus groups to use during the research process. The researchers agree that a PAR qualitative study was the best method because the research utilized interviews, observations, and reflections as tools. However, there were some suggestions for future research because of the research design that influenced the outcomes. Each researcher had suggestions within their demographic location; these suggestions follow.
Suggestion One: Timing of Implementation

The research design should take into consideration the school calendar from the local community, establish a more consistent meeting schedule with at least a biweekly meeting opportunity for the researchers, and build in expectations of youth and family time commitments.

Build in more time to implement the research. Time to complete the stages of YPEM became a factor because of the schedule the youth groups had for meetings. The timeline of the IRB for the study also created delay in starting at the beginning of the school year. The researchers’ time for meeting the goals and deadlines, field observations, and organization of six teams across three time zones for discussion and meetings on the research also had an impact on the outcome. The timeline of the project also coincided with problematic weather, which affected the implementation process.

Suggestion Two: Broaden Demographics

It is recommended that a broader demographic of participants and researchers be included in the research. This includes having the parents or guardians as part of the study and exploring their perspectives about youth voice, engagement, and empowerment. This could improve trust and provide acknowledgment of parents and guardians for the process. This might also be useful in providing more insight into the community and cultural perspectives of the youth involved in YPEM.

Adults often created barriers. Because the research is designed around empowering youth, adults had to be involved; however, their level of involvement or willingness to participate had direct impacts on the progress of youth empowerment.
Mentors, parents, and researchers made up the group of adults involved in the research. The role of the mentor should be to explain partnerships to youth, as well as providing collaboration and communication tools to connect youth to other adults. If mentors were too involved, they persuaded the youth to act on their own agenda and suppressed youth voice. In such situations, adults acted as decision makers and not facilitators. When adults were under-involved, logistical issues were present due to lack of consent, transportation, funding, and support for youth endeavors that required adult facilitation.

Suggestion Three: Multiple Researchers

It would be beneficial to have more than one researcher with each group. The research was designed with six case studies across the United States involving six researchers, six mentors, and up to 54 participants within the focus groups. Multi-dimensional demographics in the groups varied from remote rural communities on the Navajo Indian Reservation, Tribal gateway communities in Reno-Sparks, rural and metropolitan communities, suburban communities, to inner city communities. These variables added to the sampling, but also made the management of consistency and human error a larger factor on data collection and analysis.

Future research could include focusing on process instead of the development of the guidebook. This would allow multiple researchers to work with one group, to minimize human error and implicit bias. The current research design is multifaceted; a more focused research design could result in a closer examination of the process within communities of youth empowerment. Whereas this research design had two large components, the implementation of the process with the six locations and the
development of the guidebook. The themes and strategies provided an overview of six locations, but a longitudinal term study would provide more insight into the detailed process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we present recommendations that resulted from the research. The researchers, through reflection on data, identified four key themes: education, partnerships, communities, and mentors. The following recommendations support forward movement using YPEM as a guide within these four areas.

Recommendation One: Education

The findings and recommendations could lead to a leadership education program for educators and informal agencies working with youth. In order to be effective, implementation needs to follow a solid system. Researchers recommend when implementing YPEM that educational leaders should be clear regarding the mission and vision of the program and that they provide curriculum and training support for teachers and administrators. Ultimately, educators must be willing to accept their role in the project as a resource and not a leader. Educators should provide a safe and trusting space for youth to explore their ideas for problem identification and solution and resist the temptation to control and censor youth voice. Schools and informal agencies need to address liability training with the adults who will work in the mentorship capacity.

The mission of YPEM is to empower and engage youth as well as activate youth voice in order for them to affect change. District and agency leadership should ensure
that this aligns with the mission and vision of their school or agency. Desired outcomes for the student body should correlate with the motion of the model. It is recommended that the youth groups involved in each project be limited to 15 youth per mentor. Groups larger than that are not recommend as this may hinder the surfacing of leadership skills.

Curriculum for educators is available through activities expounded upon in the Youth 3E Guidebook (Appendix 9). The activities, as well as the scope and sequence, are suggestions and may be adapted based on community needs. At the forefront, educators must allow youth to develop a process to establish norms and procedures. Groups should work through team building and trust building activities before deciding upon a project focus.

Recommendation Two: Partnerships

Partnerships are imperative for collaboration and come in various forms. The researchers recommend cultivating structured partnerships that involve youth-to-youth collaboration, parental input, as well as community and intergenerational partnerships that help with the unpacking and amplification of youth voice and empowerment. First, a structured framework for youth-to-youth collaboration and partnership building is essential to ensuring consideration of multiple perspectives among a group throughout each stage of the YPEM process. Next, a framework for parents as partners throughout the process ensures that parental influence does not become a hindrance, but rather a means of support as youth continue to explore critical issues via YPEM. Community partnerships are essential to the process and include connecting youth to local leaders, resources, organizations, and businesses whose missions and visions supports the work
that youth are engaging in. A critical component to this kind of partnership is arming youth, within a structured framework, with the necessary skills to engage in intergenerational conversations, perspectives, beliefs, and views. Not only does this idea help youth engage with diverse people, but it also will allow them to gain entrepreneurial skills and enhance their communication skills generally. Partnerships engage multiple people, businesses, and representatives in common causes, making them stronger and, by reflecting multiple viewpoints across demographics, strengthens the likelihood of change.

Recommendation Three: Communities

Facilitators in youth-led endeavors should be knowledgeable about the communities in which youth reside, and share a goal to embrace the youth as integral citizens that are irreplaceable. The adult mentors must have a mindset that recognizes that youth issues are relevant to the needs of the community and that addressing them will benefit the community as a whole. In addition, it is imperative for adults to believe that youth should be at the center of problem-solving issues that affect them, given the direct impact these issues have on their well-being and futures.

In turn, the community must embrace youth as strong leaders who can change outcomes for their own citizens. Communities should provide youth with safe spaces to interact with each other without the fear of judgement, violence, or impermanence. Adults in the community should present themselves as role models for youth and show them the value of making mistakes while giving them the space to make their own failures and grow from them.
Finally, adults who are supporting youth-directed change should be aware of cultural implications that may arise due to the demographic barriers that surround the community. It is crucial for adults to know how community culture may affect the outcomes of youth, the implementation of change, and the general day-to-day interactions of citizens within differing communities. It is the responsibility of adults in those communities to instill youth with their cultural belief systems and to support them as they develop their unique cultural identity.

Recommendation Four: Mentors

The first recommendation for mentors is to develop training for adults. The role of the mentor is critical to the process of empowering youth. There are many adults, who assume a mentorship role, but have no training or role models. This training would include developing a mentorship program by using the YPEM as a model. This model would result in the development of a mentorship program for adults as community leaders. The development of a sister model, Mentor Participatory Engagement Model (MPEM), would further advance this research.

Research showed that successful mentors were present and gave their true self. People can go through training, but interpersonal skills are necessary for mentors. This training should include modeling to observe best practices in action to bring open, honest dialogue, varied perspectives, and a bottom up processing strategy by observing them in real time.
Another recommendation for mentors is building their communication skills such as active listening, talking with youth frequently and consistently, and modeling public speaking and conversational skills. Communication was a strategy that all case studies mentioned as essential to empowering youth. This includes providing mentors with consistent and embracing transparent, two-way communication. This also supports learning and reflects active listening. Youth are aware of adult motives and will disengage if they sense that the adult is only there to check off a list, rather than to engage and empower.

The combination of the observed modeling and the demonstration of excellent communication skills support youth in building trust and comfort. To avoid adults becoming barriers, train them to be active and engaged mentors for youth. Training content for adults would include modules on youth voice, youth empowerment, how to engage as partners, and would provide collaboration and communication tools to connect youth to other adults.

The final recommendation is to build mentorship within community leaders. While there are some leaders who recognize youth, they do not necessarily recognize them as leaders within their community. Partnerships within the community help to provide insight to the strategies that work for the community itself. YPEM provides an inclusive mentoring structure for adults in varying roles throughout the community so that they will have the tools to empower youth. This also then promotes peer-to-peer mentoring with youth, which results in youth not only being empowered, but also moving to empower their peers as mentors to them.
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REFLECTION

At the beginning of this program, the six researchers for this study worked in fields and positions that connect to youth communities. This included implementing programs that built connections with youth and their leadership journey. We have included our reflections on this process in the journeys below.

Researcher One: Curlinda Mitchell Blacksheep

Being a Native American adult woman residing on the Navajo Indian reservation with my own family, I expected to learn from my research on the Native American youth group that younger generations have little or no interest in the preservation or learning of the culture and heritage of their Native American ancestors. I learned this from the older Native American mentor, as the youth group had not expressed this in my interviews with them. I was happy and filled with hope that the youth group in my local, remote, reservation was communicating their great concerns about their traditional native languages and cultural information, e.g., stories and songs, not being passed down to them or the next generation. However, there exists a gap, and that seems to disconnect the two groups with regard to the possibilities for changing this for future generations. The striking realization of how the youth in my community are reaching out for an opportunity to shine through with their leadership for the next generation and the adults who need to sincerely see them, and hear them, because that is the answer. After this research reached its conclusion, I believe strongly through training and tools to work on this hope for positive change with closing this gap, such as with the Youth Participatory Empowerment Model and accompanying guidebook is a way for any youth, any
nationality, any demographic, to build on the youth spirit. This journey has definitely empowered me to see that as the adult in my community, I want to seek the change in myself first, and then work to help our Native American youth engage with their culture and language. My own children deserve to learn their native language from their own parent.

Researcher Two: Amanda J. Dworak Rowland

At the beginning of this program, I made a career choice to move into a position that involves strategic planning, training, and facilitation for youth and volunteer programming at a regional level. For 16 years, I had been in field positions that were connected to youth within similar communities. During this career transition, I held on to my values: listening to community members, working in partnership and collaboration, knowing when to step back so others have the space to step up.

I wanted to work with Native Youth because I wanted to give space for representation of their voice in this project. I knew this would come with challenges, but that pushing myself to be uncomfortable is necessary for working with communities and bringing your true authentic self. There are some youth, who are uncomfortable every day; it is normal for them. This research project pushed me, while it gave youth new space to feel comfortable in new roles. It built more infrastructure to continue to make connections between communities of color and their public lands. At the same time, the project challenged traditional leadership roles, and acknowledged the history of colonialism, racial cleansing, and social injustice.
Having grown up in New Orleans as a young gay Latino, with a single immigrant mother from Nicaragua, I was very much aware of the social issues that directly affected me, and those close to me. These issues included racial and ethnic discrimination, poverty, and a lack of language access for non-English speaking individuals. Though I was privileged with this high level of social awareness, I did not have the opportunity to engage in a project or experience that would enhance my own youth voice to create some kind of community change. Out of my desire to help youth cultivate the skills needed to be leaders at various community levels, I became an educator, formal and informal. Prior to engaging in this program, I worked in formal education as a teacher and school leader, but one of the greatest roles that I ever held was that of a youth engagement director for a local Latino development non-profit. This work, and the passion that continued to be a part of me years later, is what sparked the desire to engage in this particular research project for my doctorate. It has always been evident to me that when adults provide a safe space for youth to engage in addressing critical issues, power evolves that can lead to transformative opportunities. When adults allow youth to take charge in issues that directly affect them, a greater impact is had. These thoughts and feelings were verified through the implementation of the YPEM in this research project. I witnessed timid, scared young people transform into boisterous, thoughtful individuals who were willing to share their personal narratives (some of which were painful) and who used that to channel the energy needed to do research and create a plan for engaging with the community. More than ever before, I remain a deep believer in the power of youth voice and community organizing.
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Researcher Four: Lindsay Clemens

After the incidents in Ferguson revolving around the death of Michael Brown, I saw a community divided. This was a community that was making great strides to revive itself from systemic economic depression and racist policies, which had prevented its growth. Returning to my hometown near Ferguson after a decade’s absence left me with a sense of emptiness. This was not the town that I left, and for many reasons it should not have been. For a few years, I grappled with what to do with my drive and finally landed on empowering youth to become more involved in civic affairs. My generation is disconnected and apathetic towards governing forces; they rarely vote, and most do not feel they cannot make a difference in their own lives. Working with these youth has given me a sense of purpose again and a faith that our future generations will create change in our broken system. These youth members were children when Michael Brown was shot and have very few memories about what chaos ensued afterwards, but they are the generation that will benefit from the many policies that have been put in place to deter the practices that once crippled our community. This research made me confront my whiteness and sit with the discomfort of privilege as well as explore the shame associated with my own generation’s lack of democratic involvement. With that being said, it also inspired me to see so much good to come and to hope that this new generation will be the ones to save the world.

Researcher Five: Mary E. Gillis

Through my 20-year tenure as a public high school journalism teacher, I have organized my classroom to be youth-led. Because our work is published, my day job is
to coach teenage journalists to identify issues that they are passionate about, interview experts, research background information about issues, and publish stories that illuminate the issue in order to ignite conversations. Students on my staff tackle hard topics like how the opioid crisis is affecting our area, the importance of mental health care, suicide awareness, sex education, and macroaggressions in public schools, bullying, and inequitable funding of schools. These students have impact by inviting dialogue with students and teachers, but their voice is rarely acknowledged outside of the school. In embarking on this research, I wanted to work with youth who are younger, and not attached to the school, to see how the process of empowerment would aid in building empowered youth at the community level. The project that the youth self-selected will provide a space to continue to expand. I was excited to hear, as the time for planting the garden grew near, that the youth were already dreaming of future uses of the educational space, including using a section to add a memorial for fallen students who are part of the public-school system.

Researcher Six: Melanie Canaday-Talley

As a middle school science teacher, I work with youth daily, guiding them in scientific research and engineering design. Students apply the scientific and engineering process to learn more about the world around them. In this research, I wanted to focus on the students’ place in their community and help them realize the impact that they can have. Middle school is a pivotal point for many youth. It is a time when youth determine who they want to be and what place they want to have in the world at large. They start to see themselves more as individuals capable of making choices outside of their family
unit. This project gave me a view of my students as capable leaders within their school community. The passion they have for creating a better environment is contagious. Although they are still working on focusing and organizing their endeavors, these students are committed to collaboration and growth.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to examine how to empower youth and youth mentors with a YPEM that identified and engaged a community heritage or social justice need. Based on research regarding youth empowerment the following questions emerged:

Central Question

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect youth and adult perceptions of the ability of youth to influence a) a community heritage, or 2) social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. Does implementing YPEM affect the ability of youth and adult mentors to cultivate youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment as it relates to a community heritage or social justice issue?

2. Which aspects of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

In this section, we will answer those questions.

The initial model, presented at the end of chapter two, provided the structure to
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begin an action research study with our groups. Built upon findings from our literature review, we drafted a guidebook that provided activities to assist youth in the process of identifying and solving a community issue. Scaffolding in the guidebook helped to distinguish activities that are age appropriate since the age of participant youth varied from 8-25. Youth groups, under the guidance of a mentor, followed the sequencing as identified, moved through the model as suggested. The researchers noted that the model and lessons are suggestions and that there would be some variance due to established nature of some participant groups, while others were formed to be part of the project.

Following the six-month research period, which included collection of qualitative data through interviews and field observations, the team convened to analyze what the results revealed about the effect YPEM had on youth and adult perceptions of youth’s ability to influence a) a community heritage, or b) social justice issue. We found importance in providing space and time for youth to consider a community heritage or social justice need in their community. To maximize the impact of the model, the team unpacked four components to progress. First, strong youth leaders are very important, whether they are either elected, appointed, or emerge naturally through the process. A nest or safe space and trust building are central to a group’s ability to engage. Third, the research showed that, when partnerships from the community are strong, the empowerment process thrives. Finally, adult mentors, who are present but willing to guide from the side, can aid in supporting youth voice and engagement. Through initial stages of the project, the youth came together to build a team and discuss an action that they could take to resolve the issue. In doing this, they relied upon values of individuals in the group, the mission of the whole group, and the impact of their work on their
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society. The original model reflects sequenced steps, but YPEM is most effective when participant groups flowed freely through stages. Building trust, encouraging exploration and growth, and engaging partners throughout the process helped the youth realize the value of their voice. Implementing YPEM affected youth and adult perceptions of youth’s ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue by providing a framework to encourage leadership development in youth, and by presenting a sequence of competencies that helped groups to engage and act on community needs.

The first sub-question called upon the research team to identify whether or not the YPEM supported youth groups and mentors in the process of cultivating youth voice, engagement, and empowerment. The projects that emerged through this research stand as evidence that YPEM was helpful in each of the three missions. Because of the research, six communities across the country saw youth, who were as young as eight, working toward betterment of their world. In Arizona, the youth planned, organized, and implemented an evening event for the community of Shonto, centered around the night sky, with a goal of educating, in conjunction with local astronomers from Northern Arizona University, their own community. They were also educated about the Native American cultural teachings from ancestors about the night sky. The youth created a night sky activity booklet that is being adopted by Navajo National Monument for continued use alongside the National Park Service Night Sky Explorer program. In Nevada, on the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, the UNITY youth created a pantry for teens that contains food and hygiene products. This includes building survival packages for teens to receive for food over the weekend. The youth identified education as the initial issue, but realized the impact hunger had on youth to focus on their education. This food
pantry is only for teens, by teens. In New Orleans, a vulnerable population of undocumented youth shared their stories, conducted research on youth voice and impact in other communities, and began to plan a community panel discussion that would bring together adult and youth leaders to discuss issues that were important to them. This included issues of education, immigration, and ways in which formal educators could help support them through the “red tape” they come across due to their statuses. In addition, the New Orleans youth helped to draft a letter for the Mayor of the city informing her of their project and suggesting ways in which she could continue to engaged with issues affecting the local undocumented immigrant Latinx community. In Ferguson, the Ferguson Youth Advisory Board successfully threw a pre-prom party in partnership with another organization. The party met the needs of youth by providing them with necessities for prom and gave them a safe space away from drugs, violence, and alcohol use. The event allowed the youth to be teens without constraint and supported them in a way that they would not have been able to obtain without this support. The youth members were proud of their accomplishment and the formation of a new partnership. In rural, mid-America, a native agronomy garden, planted by youth, exists because of the group’s partnership with Master Naturalists and local government agencies. As the plants grow, so will the actions of the youth, who are now working on educational interpretive boards to connect community to a piece of its heritage. Over years to come, the group will imagine and develop future uses for this space. In Berkeley, Missouri, Student Council members worked on improving the culture of the school. They specifically wanted to address bullying and how members of the school communicated with each other. The goal was to reduce the number of negative
interactions and raise the number of positive interactions. All of these improvements to local communities stand in real time to display the power of youth engagement. YPEM served as a valuable guide to help young people act upon the ideas they have.

YPEM led the youth to experience empowerment in their community. Before implementation of YPEM strategies, most of the groups had not been engaged in bottom up change making. While a few groups had prior involvement in community service, none had been part of a program that began with youth identifying a need in a community and ended with the youth themselves planning, organizing, and implementing action to make the change happen. At the end of the project, participant reflected on their growth and examples of how the participant groups grew are highlighted in the case studies.

Our second sub question is to identify how integrating SCM attributes into the model affected the process. The team found that the values central to Astin (1996) and HERI’s (1996) SCM, helped to explain the observed YPEM outcomes. While the goal of the project was to empower youth to act in community, that result does not take place in a vacuum. Values and leadership skill sets simmer in the backdrop of all leaders. Before one can develop, do, study, act, and reflect, a leader must recognize her own values, motivations, and biases. The SCM called this Consciousness of Self. Group members have to undergo the process of identifying and articulating the self to the group. Once the individual leader undergoes work to transform those personal values into action, she begins the process of commitment. These three attributes of the SCM strengthen the individual and form the skeleton of a group. Once the group members come together, collective selves merge and the goal is to adopt a group identity. This is where collaboration drives a common purpose and requires the skill of engaging in civil
disagreement. In this realm, groups can act to invoke change by engaging partnerships and mentors in a community. These three attributes strengthen the group. Armed with a strong group mission, the engaged group reaches what the SCM refers to as citizenship. The word can be problematic in certain populations, as we uncovered in this process, but for the purpose of the model, it speaks to how the individual and group become respectfully engaged in community. These six leadership attributes help explain how leaders can affect community change.

Through analysis of results and reflection on the process, the team revised the model to reflect feedback and emergent themes. Additionally, the team revised the guidebook (Appendix 9) to reflect strategies that were successful in leading the groups through the process of empowerment. The new model highlights the fluidity of the process and illustrates its hierarchical approach. The model presents as a two-dimensional, but the researchers envision it as hierarchical, so that empowerment rests atop a pyramid with leadership development of individual, group, community, and society as the foundation.

Over a year has passed since the students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida witnessed the massacre of their classmates. The youth leaders involved in the #NeverAgain movement continue to speak out. Though social movements often require longevity to take root, according to political science and sociology professor, David Meyer, an expert on social movements, the youth activists who emerged from the Parkland tragedy have tackled all of the challenges presented by organizing a movement. According to Meyer, they “took immediate advantage of the spotlight” and “kept up their work as the spotlight shifted.” He continued that “they’ve
built broad coalitions, sharing their spotlight with young people from very different backgrounds, defining the problem of gun violence to include crime, suicide and police violence” and that they are “strategizing for the long term, not only looking at immediate gains” (Meyer, 2019). Tragedy continues in the community as two survivors have died by suicide in the wake of grief and trauma, and by their own admission, there is much more work ahead. Studying the youth movement through the lens of the YPEM illuminates evidence of leadership development and action by building trust, exploring problems and solutions, and engaging partners to cause change. The youth leaders demonstrated attributes of the SCM; the organizers brought a commitment to the group and society to the forefront.

The future of American social and political discourse depends on connected youth. It is an important fight, and YPEM supports the efforts and potential of youth to lead. Successful social movements throughout history have inspired change, especially when youth are involved. Adults, who often have good intentions, must listen and allow youth to participate. When civil rights activist Ruby Sales was 17 years old, her life was spared when someone jumped in front of a bullet intended for her during a protest march. She went on to work as a professor, and she has dedicated much of her life to youth activism (Ruane, 2015). In an interview on the National Public Radio: TED Radio Hour with Guy Raz, in the episode Changing The World (2019), Sales eloquently described the tension that youth and adults must work through in changing the world.

It is the nature of young people to be impatient, that’s what gives them the edge to change things. I’m not expecting a young person at 13 years old to have the patience that I have, that breaks their spirits. I expect them to be demanding, I expect them to be ruthless in their demands, I expect them to push and have high expectations. What I don’t expect them to do is give up when one demand isn’t met. I find it particularly refreshing that they
have high expectations. A 40-year-old should have learned something that a 13-year-old doesn’t know. If we were to tell a 13-year-old to be patient, they probably would say what I would have said, ‘patience be damned! I want it now!’ We have to allow young people that edge. We have to allow them to be demanding. We have to allow them to push us. We have to allow them to say ‘No, not tomorrow, but right now!’ (Raz, 13:36, 2019)

This participatory action research project led to the development of a model to guide youth and their mentors through a process of creating change in communities by developing competent and confident youth to feel empowered in using their voice. Each member of the team stood witness to the process of the model as a guide for this purpose, and, in these six communities today, stands youth who have experienced success through the model. To have continued positive impact on repairing community disengagement, the youth must be heard.
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APPENDIX 1. Definitions of Core-Values of the Social Change Model
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Consciousness of Self.</strong></th>
<th>Awareness of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate one to take action. Sample Items: I know myself pretty well. I can describe how I am similar to other people.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Congruence.</strong></td>
<td>Thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty towards others; actions are consistent with most deeply held beliefs and convictions. Sample Items: I wish I could be more like myself around my friends. Being seen as a person of integrity is important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commitment.</strong></td>
<td>The psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the collective effort; implies passion, intensity, and duration, and is directed toward both the group activity as well as its intended outcomes. Sample Items: I persist in carrying out my goals. I stick with others through the difficult times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration.</strong></td>
<td>To work with others in a common effort; constitutes the cornerstone value of the group leadership effort because it empowers self and others through trust. Sample Items: I enjoy working with others toward common goals. I am able to trust the people with whom I work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Purpose.</strong></td>
<td>To work with shared aims and values; facilitates the group’s ability to engage in collective analysis of issues at hand and the task to be undertaken. Sample Items: Others in my group have similar goals to mine. I support what the group is trying to accomplish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controversy with Civility.</strong></td>
<td>Recognizes two fundamental realities of any creative group effort: that differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and that such differences must be aired openly, but with civility. Civility implies respect for others, a willingness to hear each other’s views, and the exercise of restraint in criticizing the views and actions of others. Sample Items:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creativity can come from conflict. I struggle when group members have ideas that are different from mine.

**Citizenship.**

The process whereby an individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity. To be a good citizen is to work for positive change on the behalf of others and the community. Sample Items: I am willing to act for the rights of others. I believe I have a civic responsibility to the greater public.

**Change.**

The ability to adapt to environments and situations that are constantly evolving, while maintaining the core functions of the group. Sample Items: Transition makes me uncomfortable. I can identify the differences between positive and negative change.

(Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996)
APPENDIX 2. The 7 C’s Defined
Consciousness of Self: Being aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes and emotions that motivate one to take action. Key to being able to develop consciousness of others.

Congruence: Understanding and being consistent with one’s own values, beliefs, strengths and limitations. Interdependent with Consciousness of Self. Congruence tests:
   1. Personal
   2. Collective congruence

Commitment: The psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the collective effort. Implies passion, intensity, and duration, directed both towards group activity and intended outcomes. Requires knowledge of self.

Collaboration: Leadership as a group process; relational. Encourages group to transcend individual goals, interests and behaviors. Vital that group members explore differences in individual values, ideas, affiliations, visions and identities.

Common Purpose: To work with shared aims and values enables the group to engage in collective analysis of the issues at hand and the task to be undertaken. Best achieved when all members of the group share in the vision and participate actively in articulating the purpose and goals of the activity.

Controversy with Civility: Difference will exist in the group; the differences can be accepted and resolved through open and honest dialogue. Requires trust amongst the group members. Conflicts need to be resolved but also integrated into the common purpose.

Citizenship: Not simply membership, but active engagement in community. Civic responsibility which works towards social change. The practice of good citizenship should and needs to happen at every level of the model.

(HERI, 2016)
APPENDIX 3. The Three Categories of the Seven C’s
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Individual:</th>
<th>What individual qualities should our programs attempt to develop? What personal qualities support effective collective action and social change?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Group:</td>
<td>What processes do students need to learn in order to work effectively in groups? How can collaboration foster individual development and social change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Community/Society</td>
<td>How can involvement in positive change in the community promote group collaboration and develop individual character?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from HERI, 1996, p. 19)
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APPENDIX 4. Kids These Days: Co-authored Dissertation Researcher Roles and Responsibilities
This co-authored, participatory action research project was a collaborative effort involving six doctoral students from the University of Missouri St. Louis, College of Education. Each researcher implemented the methodology that is explained in chapter three with a unique group. From the pre and post interviews with mentors and youth, and implementation and observation of the steps outlined in the model, and activities in the guidebook, each member of the team analyzed findings and discussed those in a case study. The six case studies make up the bulk of chapter four of this dissertation. To add validity to the findings, each member of the team used Dedoose software to identify codes relevant to the research questions and analyzed the codes to identify emergent themes. Each team member also blind coded another team member’s interviews for both youth and adult mentor.

In addition to the actual PAR and case study write up, team members worked collaboratively to unpack the observed phenomenon of detrimental impacts of citizen disengagement, conduct a review of literature to analyze and determine the causes and impacts of disengaged communities and the strategies that are most effective in reconnecting citizens, especially youth who live in communities that are most vulnerable. Team members served in various collaborative roles including conducting literature review research, compositing, editing, and designing.
Researcher Curlinda Mitchell Blacksheep’s Roles and Responsibility

As a co-author, and researcher in this PAR Qualitative Research, I was primarily and independently responsible for the focus group from the NAVA Youth Volunteers in Shonto, Arizona. With my dissertation team, I helped with the writing and editing of each chapter as it was developed and included all parts that pertained to my demographic focus group. My researcher role included organizing, planning, delegating, funding, writing, editing, field observations, presenting to my focus group, field interviews, transcribing, coding, scheduling meeting, communicating to my dissertation team and focus group throughout the entire research study.

Researcher Amanda Dworak Rowland’s Roles and Responsibilities

I was responsible for the implementation of the PAR with the UNITY group, of the Reno Spark Indian Colony. I collaborated with the group to observe, facilitate, attend meetings and events, and connect to specific partners. For the research team my role varied from group leader and facilitator, assistant, writer, editor, planner, to developing an infrastructure to support the group dynamics. I created, streamlined, and analyzed the research data. This includes building models to reflect the relationship between the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM), YPEM guidebook, and case study data.

Researcher Jancarlos Romero’s Roles and Responsibility

As co-author of this project, I was responsible for implementing YPEM with the Jovenes de Justicia Social en Nuevo Orleans group. This included interviewing, scheduling and executing meetings, and reflecting on the impact of YPEM. Within the research team, my role varied dependent upon delegation of tasks. All members of the group were instrumental in the creation of each step of this process and each chapter of the dissertation. Independently, I assumed a significant role in structuring the literature review, reporting findings back to the team and weaving themes together. In addition, I was responsible for creating one of the unit plans within YPEM Guidebook that was implemented in the field research. Finally, as did all other team members, I assumed the role of meeting facilitator and note taker, as needed, for our weekly check in meetings and ongoing editor of YPEM Guidebook and dissertation chapters. This is apart from conducting my own research, writing my case study, and supporting the development of YPEM Model and research methodology.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

Researcher Lindsay Clemens’s Roles and Responsibilities

During the research phases, planning, implementing, and reflecting, my roles varied from team leader, participant, and observer. I was responsible for the implementation of the PAR with the Ferguson Youth Advisory Board and the subsequent case-study that emerged from that. My role as a researcher involved scheduling, observing, writing, editing, facilitating, connecting partnerships, and communicating with multiple parties. In addition, to the physical research, my contribution to the group included organizing, delegating, executing, and managing day to day aspects of research involving such a large research team. I played a large role in the creation of the guidebook, YPEM model, and many other facets of the planning and implementation of the research.

Researcher Mary Gillis’s Roles and Responsibilities

As co-author of this project, I was responsible for implementing YPEM with the Elk Prairie 4-H Youth group. My role throughout the project varied from leader, facilitator, observer, participant, and editor. To maintain the integrity of the research, I assisted with exploration of the original phenomena, through literature case study, wrote and edited portions of each chapter, conducted interviews and observations as per the methodology, transcribed and coded interviews, and worked with the youth group to solicit partnerships to help with the implementation of their goals.

Researcher Melanie Canaday’s Roles and Responsibilities

Throughout the research process, my role and responsibilities changed from shared to individual, participant, leader and observer. I was individually responsible for implementing the PAR with the Berkeley Student Council and the writing of the case-study. As a PAR researcher, I was involved in scheduling, observing, facilitating, interviewing, writing, editing, connecting and communicating with multiple parties and partners. Within our research team, my contributions included writing, editing, organizing, planning, data analysis, and formatting. I collaborated with the group to create and modify YPEM and the guidebook. I played a large role in the creation of research models and the development of tables and graphics that focused the research. A shared responsibility for the writing and editing throughout the research.
APPENDIX 5. Pre-intervention Questions
Youth focus group pre-intervention questions ages 8-13:

Youth Voice: (Stage 1/2)

- What do you like about where you live? What do you not like about where you live? What do you think is important to adults here? What is important to kids here? What is your favorite part about living here? What is the worst part about living here?
- What would you change about where you live? Why would you change it? Who could help you change it? Why could they help?
- What can you do to help? What would your job be?

Youth Engagement: (Stage 3/4)

- Who lives in your neighborhood? Who works in your neighborhood? Who comes to your neighborhood to help?
- What do you do to help your neighborhood?
- What is your responsibility in your neighborhood?
- When you see a problem in your neighborhood, who should fix it? Could you fix it? How could you help?
- How would it be easier if people worked together to fix the problem? How would it be hard?
- When you don’t agree as a group what do you do? What have you seen adults do? How did you feel?

Youth Empowerment: (Stage 5)

- When you have to work with a group, what makes you feel good? What makes you want to share? Who helps you share? What do peers do, what do adults do?
- When your group is cooperating what does it look like?
- What steps do you take to fix a problem?
  - How do you work as a group to fix the problem?
  - What if you don’t agree? What do you do?
  - How do you know if a problem has been fixed?
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

Youth focus group pre-intervention questions ages 14-25:

Youth Voice: (Stage 1/2)

- What kind of issues are important to you? Why are they important? Do you think the issues that are important to you are the biggest issues within your community? Which community issues are most important to you?
  - If you wanted to get something changed in your community, how would you start? What would you do to make it happen?
  - If you had the power to change something in your community to make it a better place to live for everyone, what would you like to change? What do you think you would need to make that happen?
- What role do you see youth playing in making community decisions?

Youth Engagement: (Stage 3/4)

- What does it mean to be part of a community?
  - How do you view your current role in your community?
  - How do you think youth fit into the big picture of “community?”
- When you see a problem in your community, how do you work with others to produce a solution?
- Why do you feel it is important for people to work together to address issues and/or solve problems?
- Tell me about a time when you heard or participated in a conversation or lesson where you did not agree with another person.
  - Tell me a strategy that you use when you were in an uncomfortable situation to advocate for yourself or someone else.
  - Have you ever had a time when you felt like speaking up for something you believed in would get you in trouble or cause negative things to happen?

Youth Empowerment: (Stage 5)

- Think of someone who serves as a mentor to you. What strategies/skills have they taught you to help you speak up for yourself?
  - What role do partnerships play in facilitating change?
- How do you know that your voice has been heard among those around you?
  - What steps do you take to accomplish a common goal?
  - How do you work as a group to accomplish these goals?
  - How do you address disagreements about process?
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

Adult youth group mentor pre-intervention questions:

Youth Voice: (Stage 1/2)

- What makes a good citizen?
  - What is citizenship?
- Define community.
  - How do you view your current role in your community?
  - If asked to describe your society/community, what would you say?
  - What do you feel is your commitment to your community?
  - How do you think youth fit into the big picture of “community?”
- What issues are important to you?
- What is your motivation for working with youth in your community?
- How do you think a strong leader can empower youth?

Youth Engagement: (Stage 3/4)

- Define youth engagement.
  - How do you encourage youth engagement?
- What strategies have you found effective when working with young people?
- What are the biggest obstacles that citizens in your community face?
- How do partnerships support your work with youth?
- How do you build confidence among youth?

Youth Empowerment: (Stage 5)

- What role do you see youth playing in making community decisions?
  - How do you work as a group to accomplish these goals?
  - How do you address disagreements about process? What steps do you take to accomplish a common goal?
- Describe a time when a young person made change possible.
  - What did the young person do that you think showed characteristics of a leader?
APPENDIX 6. Post-intervention Questions
Youth focus group post-intervention questions ages 8-13:

- What community issues do you think are important for your group to give attention to?
  - Why do you feel that way?
  - Can you explain more?
- Now that you’ve finished this project, if you wanted to make a change in your community, how would you start? What would you do to make it happen?
- What role did you play in planning and beginning this project?
- Did you feel like you met your goal?
  - What would you change?
  - Which of these strategies did your group use?
- How did working together as a group help make the project easier?
  - How did working together as a group make the project harder?
- What are the things your mentor did that helped your group meet the project goal?
  - What partners in the community helped your group meet its goal?
- When did you feel like your voice was heard during this project?
  - Can you give an example?
  - What steps did the group take to accomplish the goal of the project?
  - What did you do about disagreements?
- Let’s study this diagram a little (see below). Notice that each circle represents “individual change,” “group change,” or “societal change.” Now, think about this project. What does this diagram mean to you?
- What did you take away from this experience?
  - Do you think that you have a better idea about how to make something happen in your community? Can you explain?
  - Is there anything else you would like to add?

Youth focus group post-intervention questions ages 14-25:

- What personal and community issues are more important to you?
  - Why do you feel that way?
  - Can you explain more?
- Now that you’ve finished this project, if you wanted to make a change in your community, how would you start? What would you do to make it happen?
- What role did you play in planning and beginning this project?
- Did you feel like you met your goal?
  - What would you change if you could?
  - What strategies worked the best?
- How did working together as a group help or hinder the work in this project?
- What skills did your mentor use during this process that helped you meet your goal?
  - What partnerships did you use to help meet your goal?
• When did you feel like your voice was heard during this project?
  ○ Can you give an example?
• What steps did the group take to accomplish the goal of the project?
  ○ What did you do about disagreements?
• Let’s study this diagram a little (see below). Notice that each circle represents “individual change,” “group change,” or “societal change.” Now, think about this project. What does this diagram mean to you?
• What did you take away from this experience?
  ○ Do you think that you have a better idea about how to make something happen in your community? Can you explain?
  ○ Is there anything else you would like to add?
Adult youth group mentor post-intervention questions:

- What are traits of a good citizen in your community?
- How does your commitment to this group of youth, fit in with your community’s values?
  - How do you think this group fits into the community?
  - How does your community respond to the needs expressed by youth?
  - What motivates you to lead (or work with) youth in community commitment?
- What issues within this group are important to you?
  - What issues in your community are important to your youth group?
- How did your group leaders empower the group during this project?
- In your opinion, did the youth feel empowered to enact change in their community as a result of this project?
  - If so, what do you think was helpful in that process?
  - How did you encourage youth empowerment during this program?
- Which strategies used in this project helped youth feel that their voice was heard?
  - In what ways did this project help youth in your group gain confidence?
- What internal and external barriers did the group face?
- Describe the role of partnerships in this project.
  - What partnership did you use to support the group and how did they support the group?
- What steps did you take to accomplish the project goal?
  - How did you address disagreements?
- The Youth Participatory Empowerment Model includes these components. As you study it, what thoughts do you have on the flow of the process? What worked for your group? What didn’t?
- Any other thoughts or feedback that you would like to share?
APPENDIX 7: Additional Case Study, Amber Hurd (not included in results)
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model that identified and engaged a community heritage or social justice need among a variety of demographic groups across the United States. This sector was one of a community located in the south area of St. Louis, Missouri.

CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH: Participants and Process

Throughout the history of St. Louis, race relations were more complex there than many other places because the city was located in a border state that permitted slavery. Urban slavery took on a character of its own. St. Louis has mirrored the national experience even until this day.

St. Louis College Prep (SCP) is a tuition-free, public charter, college prep middle and high school in the City of St. Louis. The school provides free education and transportation to 320 scholars 6th through 11th grade. The student population is as socio-economically and racially diverse as St. Louis itself. Ninety-eight percent of the scholars are African-American and free and reduced lunch eligible. The eight participants in this study were all students at SCP. The students’ interests included entrepreneurship, creativity, community development, social justice, and design.

From the onset of this project, the mentor was extremely excited about the prospect of the research as there was a deep passion for both youth and social justice. Although there were four mentors involved with the organization, only one mentor interacted with this particular group. Researchers looked for themes connecting to the seven C’s of the social change model and strategies for youth voice, youth
engagement, and youth empowerment and the interview questions were birthed from these themes. The purpose of the interviews was to get a baseline response for our research question “How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect youth and adult perception of the ability of youth to influence a heritage or social justice issue?

National Board Director and Chair Emerita of the Task Force working on long-term strategic initiatives such as the Design Census Program with Google and the National Design for Inclusivity Summit with Microsoft. She is the co-founder of the Design + Diversity Conference and Fellowship. Antionette also is an international speaker and facilitator and has a passion for youth. She has a director and lead mentors who serve with her. The mentors are charged with educating and supporting youth leadership to address racial inequities affecting Black and Latinx populations using the Equity Centered Community Design process. The hope is that this creates a youth-led, community-centered movement that challenges racial inequities in the education, media, health, and government sectors.

The primary mentor for the Creative Reaction youth group is the Founder and CEO of Creative Reaction Lab, Antoinette. Within this capacity, Antoinette has pioneered a new, award-winning form of creative problem solving called Equity-Centered Community Design. Through this capacity, Antionette has received several recognitions and awards including being named a 2018 Echoing Green Global Fellow, TED Fellow, and Camelback Ventures Fellow. Additionally, in 2014, she was named the Founding Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force of AIGA: The Professional Association of Design. Currently, she is an AIGA
The face-to-face interview took place at the researcher’s place of employment. During the interview, the youth mentor, Antoinette, was asked thirteen questions that were developed from referencing the Social Change Model of Leadership Development as well as strategies or practices noted through research, which will allow for the research team to measure YPEM’s effectiveness. The questions ranged from the definition of citizenship and community all the way to change, specifically youth inspired change.

In the pre-mentor interview, Antoinette often emphasized that people belong to more than one community and that they prefer to use the term “resident,” rather than citizen when discussing citizenship. She said: “we directly work with Black and LatinX populations and understand that there may be some individuals who don’t have citizenship, but it doesn’t make them lesser than, so we tend to use residents” (Carroll, personal communication, January 14, 2019). According to the mentor, a good resident is one who thinks about what needs to be improved in their community and recognizes what their potential role could be. Her definition of a citizen (resident) was summarized by “and so to me a good resident is someone that just ultimately cares about their community, cares about their city, their town, their state, their country” (Carroll, A., personal communication, January 14, 2019).

Norms set during the first meeting set the tone for the duration of the project. Established norms centered around communication, engagement, and respect. Youth voiced that it was imperative that everyone’s speaking time be honored. If one person was talking, the rest should be listening and not having side conversations. The second norm covered the fact that all members should be engaged and present. Everyone was expected to participate and if there was something that was not understood that would
hinder someone from participating, they would ask clarifying questions in order to remain engaged. The last set norm was that respect should always be displayed. Respect for self, others, words, and feelings. When speaking, participants agreed that they would always do so in a respectful manner, even if a disagreement arose. For the most part, norms were honored throughout the project. If a refocus needed to happen, the youth leader, Kimberly, was able to facilitate it.

The eight youth participants decided to create a short film and make a Podcast to reach out to their communities about youth and mental health. They held a strong belief that aside from the demands and responsibilities of school, youth were facing obstacles and trials that they did not know how to deal with and as a result various areas of their lives were affected. The narrative below demonstrates how YPEM was used to support and direct that process.

Discussions, meetings, observations, and project development all contributed to identifying four main themes centered around youth empowerment. The first theme was that in environments with significant trauma, it’s critical to recognize and support youth leadership. Often inner-city youth have experienced significant amounts of trauma and have rely on the presence of effective and meaningful relationships when it comes to trusting and/or working with others. When it is one of their peers who steps into the leadership role, familiarity eases concern and they are able to follow. The next emergent theme is that youth perceived self-motivation, the kind that persist during negative and tragic circumstances to be essential; adults perceived that when youth’s inner drive was awakened, they became forces to be reckoned with. There were times throughout the project when the group worked together to provide a safe, trusting environment for a
group member who struggled to communicate. Everyone was conscious of the other’s feelings and emotions which minimized the amount of stalled or unproductive moments.

Another notable theme was that because youth experienced individual trauma and shared grief, they learned to trust each other, they prioritized group member care, and they started to take more responsibility for the process and outcome. With aspects such as controversy of civility, occasional detachment from the task at hand, and loss of focus, there has to be an internal motivation that drives they youth to remain committed. The last notable emerging theme is that lack of knowledge of partnerships can stunt the progress of youth in meeting common purpose goals. Resources and partners exist, but if the youth do not know how to access them, they are irrelevant. These themes were analyzed using evidence from all interactions with the participants.

CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH: Theme One

*In environments with significant trauma, it is critical to recognize and support youth leadership.*

From the very first meeting, Kimberly proved to be a natural leader. Participants were leery about working in groups and did not know what to expect. As a result, ideas and thoughts were not flowing as freely as they needed to. Most adolescents contrary to how it may seem, actually desire structure and guidance. As captured in the words of participant, Tony, youth will easily follow those whom the majority seem to be okay with following:

People follow after who they see everyone else following after...like if they see one thing going on and it’s a lot of people following that, then they are gonna follow it too even if they don’t know what’s going on. They’re gonna follow because they see a lot of other people following (personal communication, December 19, 2018).
The mentor immediately recognized the leadership strengths in Kimberly and simply encouraged the group (without giving input) to choose a student leader to kind of facilitate the happenings. Without hesitation, they chose Kimberly. Due to various reasons, the mentor was not always able to be present. This led to the researcher at times having to step in as researcher-mentor. However, in order to maximize on Kimberly’s leadership skills, the researcher provided her with a copy of YPEM and encouraged her to facilitate the meetings and step in when the mentor was not present. Kimberly had a way of making everyone feel as if their inputs and opinions mattered. When the group would get off task, she was able to refocus everyone and continue toward the goals. Her ability to provide constructive criticism while still honing on strengths of the youth played an integral part in moving the group through YPEM process.

During the first meeting (Stage One), one of the objectives was to set norms. To break the ice, the mentor took some time to guide participants through a few team building activities. Participants acknowledged that they were going into the project with mixed emotions of nervousness and open-mindedness. Kimberly pointed out that she even had a bit of apprehension or concern due to the fact that “everyone was from the same school, I wondered if working with familiar faces would be too familiar” (personal communication, March 20, 2019). Nevertheless, the group accomplished the norm setting objective. This was first attempted through open discussion, but this method was not proving to be productive. Kimberly took it upon herself to go to the board, lead the group, and norms were established. As shown in the example she gives below, her interpersonal, critical thinking, and organizational skills and ability to utilize emotional intelligence allow her to be an effective leader who is able to get others to follow her:
There was a time where I had a conversation with someone about mental health and kids with like behavioral issues and mental health and stuff like that. And the person had some very interesting viewpoints that I didn't agree with. But what I did to try to resolve our disagreement was to try to get them to empathize. Like try to explain to them in a way that they could possibly understand even though they don't know what it's like to have a mental illness or behavior issues. So, I tried my best to like simmer down the issue to get them to where they could understand it and also staying calm you know not getting too emotional about it like speaking facts other than you know putting my own feelings into the situation (personal communication, March 20, 2019).

Recognizing the inner strength of youth was something that was near and dear to the heart of the mentor. During the pre-interview, she explained that she does not like the fact that youth are often referred to as the leaders of tomorrow or leaders of the future when in reality, they are the leaders of today, the leaders of now. Through her heavy involvement with youth, Antoinette feels that youth are pivotal to community. She pointed out that when discussing youth, adults refer to them as “youth of the future,” as if they are not of value now. Her very strong feeling concerning the lack of recognition and encouragement of youth leadership qualities, was evident in the following quote:

It’s kind of this cycle of detachment and devaluing people's voice and what they can do. I've seen a lot of young people create change in society. If we look at society it actually came from a lot of young people that has created more innovative ways in which we go about things. And so, for me youth are the center of it all, but adults and I use that term loosely, but I’ll just say adults or people that think they're better than tend to devalue what youth can bring (personal communication, March 29, 2019).

At another point in the interview, she also expressed the importance of asking the youth what they want to do to create change in the communities in which they live and get their opinions on things. Furthermore, the quote below summarizes the passion that the mentor has for cultivating youth leaders:
Many times we tend to relinquish our power because sometimes we don’t even know we have power...my working with young people was centered around not only filling my own mission of challenging young people to be champions for change in our community but also helping them develop their own purpose and mission on what they want to do to improve their communities (personal communication, March 29, 2019).

CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH: Theme Two

Youth perceived self-motivation, the kind that persist during negative and tragic circumstances to be essential; adults perceived that when youth’s inner drive was awakened, they became forces to be reckoned with.

Intrinsic motivation refers to behavior that is driven by internal rewards. In other words, the motivation to engage in a behavior arises from within the individual because it is naturally satisfying to oneself. While the Creative Reaction youth were selected to participate, it became clear throughout the process that the project would only be successful if the youth were motivated by more than just “my teacher/mentor asked me to do this.” During a post interview, when reflecting on YPEM, one youth even suggested that motivation should in some way be represented. Her thoughts were captured in the following quote: “Motivation should go with the individual because the way our group was set up, not everybody always agreed with everything. Not everyone felt motivated at times and it took self-motivation to get through things.” Another participant shared the same sentiments but also discussed how to stay motivated during negative moments. Her reflection below shows how intrinsic motivation, increased both congruence and commitment:

I personally took away how to manage my patience. It took a lot of patience working in the group, not in a negative way. Also once you put enough effort into an idea, you make anything possible. So, the fact that we came up with an ideas...put in the work to do it and finally had a positive outcome, proved that anything is possible once you put your mind to it (Kimberly, personal communication, March 20, 2019).
Unfortunately, inner city youth have frequently experienced significant amounts of trauma so much so that it is hard for adults to understand, let alone the youth themselves. With each of life’s blows, the why of their existence is questioned. They struggle to move beyond trying to escape their present situations. Despite those facts, under the sometimes hard exterior, they are young people with a why, young people who are motivated by something that matters. When given the opportunity to bring that inner drive to life, they become forces to be reckoned with. This was evident during the meeting times as the researcher saw each and every participant show up to scheduled meetings and observed increasing levels of focus. A few youths even expressed in conversation that no matter what others did, (not that anyone did anything wrong) they were committed to the project and mission. This commitment was evident when during the project, a youth mentor who had some connection to the group, suffered a tragic death. After grieving together and supporting one another, the youth were able to use the tragedy as more motivation to fight to be heard.

CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH: Theme Three

_Because youth experienced individual trauma and shared grief, they learned to trust each other, they prioritized group member care, and they started to take more responsibility for the process and outcome._

Trust was a recurring theme throughout the youth project. Most of the participants have had trust issues due to various forms of trauma prior to joining the group. Since the researcher was an educator at their home school, they entered the group with a baseline level of trust. An established relationship with the researcher allowed them to begin the project with an open mind. They were presented with YPEM over lunch and the process
that would take place was reviewed. The youth were excited to participate in the project. However, there were unfamiliar people (mentors) and new topics that required more trust to be built and nurtured.

As the youth discussed possible topics and issues facing youth, one participant immediately stated, “students getting the proper help they need to succeed.” This led to a bigger conversation about mental health in youth and how they don’t always feel safe. Many youth don’t have anyone who they trust enough to seek help so that they can be healthier contributing members to their community. It is also worth noting that when asked how they view their current role in their community, Jose, a Hispanic participant responded with “I don’t really have a big role in my community.” This was heartbreaking for the researcher who worked with him as a student long enough to know that his knowledge and potential would have contributed even more to the project. There were several times where his input and background knowledge were needed to move the group along. In essence what he was really saying was that he didn’t trust those around him enough to let his guard down and step up and play his role. As the project progressed, consciousness of self was more evident in him, which increased both his commitment and collaboration and allowed him to be the asset to the group that he was meant to be.

As the youth reflected on the project, two of the participants pointed out the importance of the mentor making them feel comfortable, “Our mentor spent a lot of extra time with us...she made sure our ideas were heard and that we were doing something that we actually wanted to do...she made sure we were comfortable with what we were doing...being comfortable was a big aspect...we were talking about a sore topic.”
During group meetings, one of the youths would always start out by doing a quick temperature check. They would ask how the researcher was doing and then check in to make sure everyone was doing okay. If someone came in with a problem or concern (unrelated to the project), they would address that before continuing. This was because of not just the trust they had with the researcher as well as amongst themselves, but they also realized that in order to be transparent and have an effective meeting, everyone had to be all in and feeling emotionally safe.

CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH: Theme Four

*By tackling issues, youth gain more awareness about topics such as mental illness in youth and become more relatable to their peers.*

As expressed by youth participant, Tammy, “One person can’t do it by their self. It’s like a one-man march, you really can’t do it by yourself. You need some kind of help. If you’re just doing it by yourself, no one will feel like it’s a big problem. But if you’ve got people standing behind you, behind the issue, they’ll be more likely to help you out.” Another participant summarized her feelings as well: “I feel like there are different people in power and then the youth don’t have as much power as they want or need in order to enjoy their community.” It was evident that she knew there were people in power but did not know how to recognize that she could work with those same people to awaken her power and make change. Youth expressed their concern for their peers who may feel as if there is no one to turn to and gained a deeper understanding of how to combat that deficit.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

If given more time, youth had visions of sharing their podcast and film in schools across their communities. “I would make the project idea smaller that way it can be more attainable, and it would allow us to actually do something even after the project was done...there are so many resources around us” was a solution spoken by youth participant, Erika. While it’s understood why she would suggest making the idea smaller, had she known how to locate partnerships, since she knew that they did exist, to support the idea as it was, her take on it may have differed.

As important as partnerships are, when dealing with youth who may have trust issues already, it is critical that wisdom be used in the approach. Antoinette, the mentor, captured these sentiments, stating: “If you are coming in with this mob mentality that you’re going to recreate or make a community better and not actually pay attention to what’s already there and what’s already created value, then you’re doing a disservice and bringing in a savior complexity” (Carroll, A. 2019, March 29, personal interview).

CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH: YPEM Strategies

During the research period many strategies emerged as imperative for the growth and empowerment of this group. Below is a table containing those:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think, Pair, Share</td>
<td>Youth thought individually about issues in the community, partnered with someone to discuss and narrow choices, and then shared out whole group.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth reflected on the project, partnered up to discuss and shared through whole group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Students brainstormed ideas, repeating back what other members said, asked clarifying questions. Youth leader sometimes cold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Youth voice/empowerment** | called other participants to encourage participation and check for understanding.

“First we have to identify what exactly we want changed...identify the problem...going back to my peers and bring it to the attention of people within the community.

“You need to inform them of every step along the way...how do we help them actually bring even the simplest pilot or prototype to life so that they also kind of see the value in their ideas.”

“Have them have co-ownership, have them co-create with what will actually be done.”

“Our mentor spent a lot of extra time with us...he made sure our ideas were heard and that we were doing something that we actually wanted to do...he made sure we were comfortable with what we were doing...being comfortable was a big aspect...we were talking about a sore topic.” |
| **Establishing of norms** | Norms were collaboratively established at the onset of the project. |

**CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH: YPEM and Overall Reflections**

At the conclusion of the research, youth were presented with a diagram that represented the steps of YPEM. They were asked what the diagram meant to them. The group leader, Kimberly, had the following response:

Oh most definitely. I think that's a good representation of how we should be. Because starting off with consciousness or self-consciousness you need to know who you are and what you're able to do in order to help someone else such as a community. So I feel like, you know, starting off with yourself. You got to be able to put forth okay, these are my abilities, this is what I can and cannot do, and this is what I can bring forth to the table in order to help my community or make a change in the world.

Another youth, Erika agreed with the diagram but felt that motivation was important enough that it should be represented in some way. The overall format of YPEM was
beneficial in helping to create youth voice and empowerment in this group. The group did not use every strategy but flowed with the ones that seemed to work best. All five stages of YPEM were executed and there was evidence of moving toward promoting change. Had there been more time, youth would have taken their project implementation even further. The eight attributes of the Social Change Theory of Leadership Model which YPEM was developed off of, were also observed throughout the process. Consciousness of self was evident in each participant from the outset of the project. As we moved through the first few stages, congruence and commitment emerged. Collaboration and common purpose were present during all five stages and brought about a few instances of controversy of civility. Youth seemed to have a grasp on the concept of common purpose and working together.

Compromise on disagreements...make sure that everybody is on the same page. With the disagreements, make sure that y’all can compromise to try to figure out how you can continue to stay on the same path and work toward what you’re trying to do. (personal communication, March 20, 2019)

Participants agreed that if time allotted, they believe that their projects would have promoted change in their community. Mentor Antoinette summarized it best when discussing the time that it may take for change to happen: “When you look at a lot of cathedrals, those took hundreds of years to build but it doesn’t mean the first builders were like, ‘you know what we’re not going to do this because we’re not going to see the end product” (personal communication, March 29, 2019).
APPENDIX 8. Case Study Overviews
Location
The Navajo Nation is a Native American territory covering about 17,544,500 acres, occupying portions of northeastern Arizona, southeastern Utah, and northwestern New Mexico in the United States. This is the largest land area retained by a Native American tribe, with a population of roughly 350,000 as of 2016. The Shonto community is located in the northeastern part of the Navajo Nation with a population of 621 according to the 2016 census from Data USA. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Group Mission
The Navajo youth group came together as a volunteer group open to work with the National Park Service and the community of Shonto Arizona to serve for change, personal development, and also to earn volunteer hours for school clubs, and gaining valuable experience for future job and career opportunity.

Navajo Youth: The objective of this group is to provide a community service, and program to represent the goals of education about local Native American culture, and to provide activates for the community and the visitors of the National Monument.

Demographics of Community
This rural area of Shonto consists of primarily Navajo residents, whom also are self-identified as the Diné people, according to their own language. The latest census in 2016, there were 42.7 times more Native residents (598 people) in Shonto, AZ than any other race or ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Figure 1. Navajo Youth planned, organized, and facilitated a Night Sky Program project with Native American Cultural education.

Figure 2. Shonto, Arizona is located on the Navajo Nation Indian reservation located in the southwest near the Four Corners.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

Location
The RSIC is a federally recognized Indian Tribe organized pursuant to the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 2934 (48 Stat. 984, 25 U.S.C 476). The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony established its first formal council in 1934 and was federally recognized government in 1936, under the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934. According to the RSIC Tribal Government, the reservation lands consist of about 15,500 acres and is located in central, west Reno, NV (Reno Sparks Indian Colony, Tribal Government, 2019).

Group Mission
UNITY’s Mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, physical, and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth, and to help build a strong, unified, and self-reliant Native America through greater youth involvement (UNITY Inc., 2018). The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony launched a UNITY chapter in early 2018. The RSIC UNITY group has 37 members and a board (which includes a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer) ranging in age from 13 – 24. A national organization, the creed for the group is “Inspiring Hope. Changing Lives Since 1976.” (Reno Sparks Indian Colony, UNITY: United National Indian Tribal Youth, 2019)

UNITY: The objective of this group shall be to provide a collective voice and represent the tribal youth in all matters that concern them; to serve as a means of mobilizing and coordinating the actions of youth, other community members and organizations toward positive goals; to promote the development of future tribal leaders; to help solve problems facing tribal youth; to coordinate school and community service projects and provide opportunities for the youth to interact for fun and fellowship. (Constitution and Bylaws of UNITY Council of RSIC)

Demographics of Community
The members of the Colony are persons of Indian blood of the Washoe, Paiute, or Shoshone Tribe. The Colony owns unique traditions, history, culture and languages, which are essential for the progress of their tribe. The tribal enrollment office reports a total membership of 1,157 as of September 2018 (Reno Sparks Indian Colony, Tribal Government, 2019).

Figure 1. UNITY Youth organize survival packages as a part of their team food pantry project.

Figure 2. Reno Sparks Indian Colony, Reno-Sparks, Nevada There is a section in the center of the city and then north in Hungry Valley.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

Location
Founded in 1718, New Orleans is a city located in the southeast region of the United States. It is the largest city and metropolitan area in the State of Louisiana with a land area of 169.43 mi and water area of 180.42 mi. New Orleans has 17 political wards and 73 “official” neighborhoods. Known as a melting pot, New Orleans is diverse in culture, food, music, and architecture. Because of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, New Orleans saw a drastic shift in demographics, with a spike in the Hispanic/Latinx immigrant community. New Orleans has become home to many migrant workers who have made New Orleans home after helping to rebuild it in the years following Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans continues to be a hub for diversity and tourism in the southern region of the United States.

Group Mission
Given the uniqueness of the group, there was no initial established group mission. The youth engaged in this project were selected to participate and had no experience in community engagement of any kind. As such, a group was formed using a random sample of youth, and through the process it became evident that the youth were focused on discussing issues that directly affected them. These were issues of language access, immigrant rights, and issues pertaining to undocumented youth.

Youth Opinion about Jovenes de Justicia Social: “I think we are growing in this group to be better citizens. We are learning about each other, and, so, with that we can make a plan for something we can do in the community to help others… that, to me, is being a good citizen… wanting to do more” (Emilio, personal communication, 2019).

Demographics of Community
Based on the population estimates via the United States Census Bureau, New Orleans is populated with over 393,292 people, 21.3% of which are below the ages of 18 years. Approximately 6% of the population is estimated to be Latinx/Hispanic identifying individuals, along with 59% Black, 31% White, and 4% identified as “other” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Over the last 14 years, since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has seen a great influx in Latinx and Hispanic migrant populations, many of which identify as undocumented. Louisiana is home to nearly 55,000 estimated undocumented immigrants, about 32% of the Latinx/Hispanic population in the state (Grimm, 2015).
Location

Ferguson, Missouri is a Midwestern state in the United States of America. The city of Ferguson is a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. It is located on the North side of the county and covers 6.19 miles. Ferguson is named after William B. Ferguson, who deeded his property to the Missouri Railroad under the condition that a depot be put there. The city enjoyed the steady growth from the railroad traffic, which later turned into streetcars and automobiles. In the 1960’s, Ferguson was known as a “sundown town” which meant that African Americans were not allowed to be in the city limits after dark. This changed with the civil rights movements. Ferguson continued to grow under the leadership of its current mayor and the drive of a few local business owners, which invested, heavily into the area (City History, Ferguson City, 2018). Ferguson-Florissant RII School District is located in that community and the youth members are all area students in the Ferguson Florissant School District.

Group Mission

The Ferguson Youth Advisory Board has seven suburban schoolchildren ages 14-18. The Ferguson Youth Advisory Board (FYAB) is intended to have 15 members, 10 being youth and five being non-voting adults, one from each ward within the city. Ferguson Youth Advisory Board members provide insight and feedback on issues related to youth in the community. They are the official youth voice of the Ferguson Youth Initiative and help determine how citizens use their energies and resources to benefit the public.

Ferguson Youth Advisory Board Mission: “FYI empowers teens from Ferguson and surrounding communities to become productive, positive & contributing members of the community” (Ferguson Youth Initiative, 2018).

Demographics of Community

Ferguson has 20,728 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016), 45% of the population are males and 55% are females; 27% of the residents are Caucasian, 68% are African Americans, 3.4% are mixed race, 1.9% are Hispanic, and .6% are Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The median income is $41,369 with a poverty rate of 22.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Figure 1. Ferguson Youth Advisory Board Members organizing the closet for the pre-prom party

Figure 2. Ferguson, Missouri located in North St. Louis County.
ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH GROUP

Location
Phelps County, Missouri is a Midwestern state in the United States of America. The county includes twelve towns that span 672 square miles of land and has an overall population of 44,764. Much of the county is within the Ozark Highlands. The County history is heavily rooted in agriculture, with a large portion of its land dedicated to multi-generational farming. Missouri has “nearly 100,000 farms, covering two-thirds of the state's total land acreage and supporting many of the state's top agricultural commodities” (Missouri Department of Agriculture, 2019). An estimated 157,000 acres of land in Phelps County is home to operational farms, and the market value of the products sold on these farms is $11,718,000 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012).

Group Mission
The Phelps County 4-H group formed, in part, to preserve and advocate for the county’s agricultural heritage. The Elk Prairie 4-H Youth Group has 15 members, ranging in age from 8-18. 4-H is a nationally recognized, nonprofit, youth organization; its purpose statement is “Engaging youth to reach their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development” (4-H.org). Phelps County, Missouri has several local chapters; Elk Prairie is one of those chapters.

Mission: “To give the county 4-H membership and leaders a voice in the overall 4-H program in the county, to give the members and leaders an opportunity to initiate countywide movements, to promote the 4-H clubs in the county so that all county youth may have an opportunity to take advantage of the 4-H program, and to establish needed policies” (Phelps County 4-H Bylaws).

Demographics of Community
Phelps county residents are 90.7% Caucasian. 87% of residents have earned a high school diploma while 27.9% have earned a Bachelor’s degree. According to the US Census Bureau (2017) 19.6% of the county’s population live in poverty.

Figure 1. Phelps Country 4-H Youth Group explores a potential site for the agronomy garden project

Figure 2. Phelps County, Missouri located in the Ozark Highlands in the Mark Twain National Forest
BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL

St. Louis, Missouri

Location
Berkeley Middle School was one of three middle schools in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. It was located in Berkeley, Missouri a North County suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. At the time the district had 17 elementary schools, three middle schools, three high schools and one alternative school. It also supported a PROBE gifted program, the Challenger Learning Center, Little Creek Nature Area and the STEAM Learning Academy. (Ferguson-Florissant School District. https://www.fergflor.org/domain/72.2019.)

Group Mission
The mission of the Student Council is to build leadership and encourage community within the school.

1. To provide opportunities for students to gain leadership skills and an appreciation for responsibility and accountability. 2. To provide ways in which students may broaden their interests and develop new experiences. 3. To foster healthy student-student, student-teacher, student-administration, and student-community interaction. 4. To provide a channel of communication through which students can contribute to the school program. 5. To develop an interest in current issues that involves all segments of the student population. 6. To promote more student body involvement through pep assemblies, “information” assemblies and other whole-school events (Ferguson-Florissant School District. https://www.fergflor.org/domain/72.2019.).

Demographics of Community
The school was 90% African-American with the remaining 10% Asian, Hispanic, Multiple Race, and White, 54% female and 46% male. The school was 100% Free and Reduced Lunch. Berkeley Middle School had been classified as an At-Risk school for the state of Missouri.

Figures 1 & 2. Youth develop a plan of action using YPEM as a guideline.
APPENDIX 9: Youth 3E Guidebook
YOUTH 3E
ENGERRIZED, ENGAGED, EMPOWERED
GUIDEBOOK

Drs. Mary E. Gillis, Lindsay Clemens,
Amanda J. Dworak Rowland, Melanie Canaday-Talley, Amber Hurd,
Curlinda Mitchell Blacksheep, Jancarlos Jose Romero
CITING THE YOUTH 3E GUIDEBOOK

The Youth 3E Guidebook contains a compilation of activities that support best strategies to promote youth groups and mentors in identifying and engaging in community change. A team of researchers developed the guidebook to support a participatory action research study conducted at the University of Missouri St. Louis. When possible, we identified the primary source or contributor of the activity. Since many activities are broadly used, it was not always possible to locate the original source. Those who wish to use and cite this work may use the following information.

Authors:
Mary E. Gillis, Lindsay Clemens, Amanda Dworak-Rowland, Melanie Canaday-Talley, Amber Hurd, Curlinda Mitchell Blacksheep, Jancarlos Jose Romero

Title:
Youth 3E Guidebook: Energized, Engaged, Empowered

Full Research Publication:
Kids These Days: Increasing Youth Engagement in Community Heritage and Social Justice through the Implementation of a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model

City/State:
St. Louis, Missouri

Institution:
University of Missouri St. Louis

Advisor:
Theresa Coble, PhD

Year:
2019
FOREWORD

This guidebook was designed as a curriculum resource to support youth leadership. It is the product of findings that developed through action research that was presented in a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Educational Practice Degree at the University of Missouri St. Louis. A team of six researchers worked in the field with six youth groups to identify effective strategies for developing youth empowerment. Using those strategies, the team developed a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) to provide youth groups and their mentors with sequencing and activities to encourage youth to be proactive in addressing community heritage or social justice needs within their community.
# KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

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### UNIT FIVE: Change-Making
- Presenting & Acting
- Reflection & Showcasing Positive Actions

Youth Participatory Empowerment Model 2.0
Sources: (Anderson & Herr, 2010; HERI, 1996; Kemmis, 1982)
The Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) combines stages of Project-Based Learning and Action with leadership competencies derived from the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996). Though the model is presented as two-dimensional, the designers intend it to be hierarchical. Youth empowerment, the end goal, is at the top and it is built by developing leadership and action competencies that are formed from a thorough exploration of the individual self, the group, the community, and society as a whole.

The curriculum in this book is developed by using this model. The model was field tested in six sites across the United States and what emerged as strategies and sequencing forms the connections in the model. For a complete look at the research behind the model’s development, find the doctoral dissertation titled *Kids These Days Increasing Youth Engagement in Community Heritage and Social Justice Through the Implementation of a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model*, from the University of Missouri St. Louis, 2019.
EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITIES (SCOPE & SEQUENCE)

Community mentors who work with youth may use this as a framework for empowering youth leaders. This framework involves five stages that are addressed, sometimes sequentially and sometimes simultaneous with other stages. Each activity has a varying degree of relevance for any given group, they are presented as suggested activities for groups that are working to achieve each step in the fluid process of the model. It is imperative that mentors be cognizant of cultural expectations and adapt the activities as appropriate.

Included in this guidebook are five units of activities and strategies to guide youth and their mentors through the empowerment process. Each unit has been developed with basic activities that are age appropriate and culturally responsive. The following pages include a timeline for the units as outlined in the YPEM.

Although the process is shown linearly, it is understood that the stages are cyclical. This flexibility acknowledges that some groups may be further along in the YPEM process than others and that the continuum is fluid and non-linear meaning groups may flow back and forth among the YPEM during the implementation period.
Activities in each stage are built using the following research-based strategies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Actions:</strong> Problem-Based Learning</td>
<td>Boyte, H. (2013). Reinventing Citizenship as Public Work(pp. 1–36). University of Nebraska Omaha.</td>
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KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

PRE-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

Prior to implementing the YPEM, mentors could benefit from interviewing their youth members to determine what values are important in their communities. Following are questions to help guide that discussion.

Adolescent Questions

Youth Voice:
1. What do you like about where you live? What do you not like about where you live? What do you think is important to adults here? What is important to kids here? What’s your favorite part about living here? What’s the worst part about living here?
2. What would you change about where you live? Why would you change it? Who could help you change it? Why could they help?
3. What can you do to help? What would your job be?

Youth Engagement:
4. Who lives in your neighborhood? Who works in your neighborhood? Who comes to your neighborhood to help?
   1. What do you do to help your neighborhood?
   2. What is your responsibility in your neighborhood?
5. When you see a problem in your neighborhood, who should fix it? Could you fix it? How could you help?
6. How would it be easier if people worked together to fix the problem? How would it be hard?
7. When you don’t agree as a group what do you do? What have you seen adults do? How did you feel?

Youth Empowerment:
8. When you have to work with a group, what makes you feel good? What makes you want to share? Who helps you share? What do peers do, what do adults do?
9. When your group is cooperating what does it look like?
10. What steps do you take to fix a problem?
   1. How do you work as a group to fix the problem?
   2. What if you don’t agree? What do you do?
   3. How do you know if a problem has been fixed?
Teen and Young Adult Questions

Youth Voice:
4. What kind of issues are important to you? Why are they important? Do you think the issues that are important to you are the biggest issues within your community? Which community issues are most important to you?
5. If you wanted to get something changed in your community, how would you start? What would you do to make it happen?
   a. If you had the power to change something in your community to make it a better place to live for everyone, what would you like to change? What do you think you’d need to make that happen?
6. What role do you see youth playing in making community decisions?

Youth Engagement:
7. What does it mean to be part of a community?
   a. How do you view your current role in your community?
   b. How do you think youth fit into the big picture of “community.”
8. When you see a problem in your community, how do you work with others to produce a solution?
9. Why do you feel it is important for people to work together to address issues and/or solve problems?
10. Tell me about a time when you heard or participated in a conversation or lesson where you did not agree with another person.
   a. Tell me a strategy that you use when you were in an uncomfortable situation to advocate for yourself or someone else?
   b. Have you ever had a time when you felt like speaking up for something you believed in would get you in trouble or cause negative things to happen?

Youth Empowerment:
11. Think of someone who serves as a mentor to you. What strategies/skills have they taught you to help you speak up for yourself?
   a. What role do partnerships play in facilitating change?
12. How do you know that your voice has been heard among those around you?
13. What steps do you take to accomplish a common goal?
   a. How do you work as a group to accomplish these goals?
   b. How do you address disagreements about process?
UNIT ONE: Forming a Group

1.1 Recruiting Members
1.2 Establishing Norms
1.3 Trust & Safety
1.4 Know Thyself (Consciousness of Self)
1.5 Collective Mission (Congruence)
1.6 Gaining Commitment

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<td>1.3 Trust &amp; Safety</td>
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Notes:
1.1 Recruiting Members

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<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
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<td><strong>Objective: Recruiting members</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Find new members that support the group’s mission</td>
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<td><strong>Activity: Snowball</strong></td>
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<td>● Have students write a name on a piece of paper. When asked to</td>
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<td>snowball throw the paper across the room to a peer. That peer</td>
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<td>adds a name. Repeat one more time. Divide responsibilities of</td>
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<td>contacting potential members.</td>
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<td><strong>Objective: Set norms</strong></td>
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<td>1. How will we work together?</td>
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<td><strong>Activity:</strong></td>
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<td>2. Have participants choose which words mean the most to them</td>
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<td>a. Cooperate</td>
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<td>b. Take turns</td>
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<td>c. Listen</td>
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<td>e. Be nice</td>
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<td>f. Write it down</td>
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<td>g. Take a vote</td>
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<td>3. Develop norms using the words in sentences (Examples)</td>
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<td>a. We will listen to each other and take turns talking. We will</td>
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<td>make a plan and write it down.</td>
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<td>b. If we don’t agree we will be nice and take a vote</td>
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1.2 Establishing Norms

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<td>• Listen carefully</td>
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KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

- Address one another respectfully
- Address comments to the group (no side conversations)
- Use sensitivity to take turns and not interrupt others
- Be courageous in presenting your own thoughts and reasoning, but be flexible and willing to change your mind in the face of new and compelling evidence

principles related to a particular content, and articulate different points-of-view. The group conversation assists participants in constructing meaning through disciplined analysis, interpretation, listening, and participation.

1.3 Trust & Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Build Trust</strong></td>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop trust between participants</td>
<td>1. Hula Hoop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td>Venture Team Building Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place hula hoop on the arm of one participant. Then have all participants make a circle by connecting hands. The hula hoop must go around the circle and students may not unclasp hands.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding questions</strong></td>
<td>Materials:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What was the issue that we picked to focus on?</td>
<td>1. Paper, Markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why is that important to you?</td>
<td>2. Graphic Organizer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective: Build Trust**

Ice cream social! But first… Let's look at how our differences make us stronger. Leaders have a lot of personality traits and they are not all the same. What are some traits that some leaders demonstrate that you think makes them a good leader?

Today we are going to take a personality quiz that was developed by the Philoptochos Leadership Institute. This personality quiz breaks leaders into three types: Chocolate, Vanilla, and Strawberry. Take note that

Strategies:
Discuss and analyze traits of a leader and the value of teams
Eat ice cream and share results informally with friends
NONE of the styles is better than the other, yet the survey shows the strengths that can be pulled from all types of people and the idea is that we are stronger as leaders together (as “neapolitan”)

Take Quiz
Discuss the results

What kinds of tasks in this group would be good for people who are Chocolate? Vanilla? Strawberry?

### 1.4 Know Thyself (Consciousness of Self)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> Consciousness of Self</td>
<td>Materials:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong> Keep a journal to reflect on experiences and perspectives</td>
<td>Journal, guiding questions, writing utensils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guiding Questions:**
- Am I this emotion?
- Am I this thought?
- Am I this physical sensation?
- Am I this circumstance?
- Am I this body?
- Am I this personality?
- Am I experiencing discomfort?
- Am I happy with this thought?
- Am I motivated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Consciousness of Self, Youth Voice</th>
<th>Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong> Recognizing youth voice is important for youth to realize as a part of the decision making process, to determine direction of their learning, and how they represent themselves throughout society. This activity provide youth examples and definitions from different perspectives while they are building their own definition.</td>
<td>1. What is Youth Voice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding Questions:</strong></td>
<td>2. Internet – ability to project video to youth with audio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe youth voice?</td>
<td>3. Chart paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Paper for student reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Markers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What does youth voice mean to you?

### What have you observed when you talk to adults about your ideas?

### What role do youth play within the community?

**Activity: What is Youth Voice? Activity**

**Strategies:**
- Communication, youth voice, collaboration

---

### Objective: Identify issues/perspectives

5. What issue is important to you?

**Activity:** Have participants answer the following questions on matching posters and place appropriately

- **a.** What things do you like about your community? (blue)
- **b.** What things do you not like community? (yellow)

Have participants look at plus and deltas to determine how they can enact change.

- **c.** What would you make different in your community? Why? Use data from blue and yellow. Are we starting fresh or building on something that already exists (green)

**Examples:**
- Developed with partners and mentors

**Materials:**
- 3. 4 poster boards or other designated areas marked: Plus (pink), Minus (yellow), Delta (green), Issues
- 4. post its-3 different colors corresponding to questions

---

### Objective: Identify vision & mission

**Guiding Questions:**
- What is important to you in a group?
- What makes you feel strong?
- What makes you feel weak?
- How do you work best?
- What is the most important thing for this group to do?

**Materials:**
- Paper
- Pens

**Strategies:**

7. Popcorn
   - Each participant writes something they think is important for the vision and mission and when we say popcorn they throw it at the leader. The leader takes the
words and arranges them to create a mission and vision statement.

1.6 Gaining Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> Build Trust, Gain Commitment</td>
<td>Materials:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong> Creating a contract. Have youth members create a contract to that they all sign. Include elements from guiding questions.</td>
<td>1. Large chart paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding Questions:</strong></td>
<td>2. Markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose of this group?</td>
<td>3. Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the expectation for meeting attendance?</td>
<td>4. Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who should be at meetings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should be accomplished at meetings?</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should be the outcome of meetings?</td>
<td>1. Round Robin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Activity: Accountability Buddies | (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) |
| Play music. Have youth members walk around the room with their hand up. When the music stops them must find a partner and high five them. This will be their accountability partner. These partners will keep each other in the loop and make sure they attend meetings and events. | 2. Snake |
## 2.1 Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PLAN</strong></th>
<th><strong>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Active Listening</strong></td>
<td><strong>Materials:</strong> WiFi access Julian Treasure’s 5 Ways to Listen Better (Treasure, 2011) Active Listening Activity (Dresdner, n.d.) <strong>Strategies:</strong> Active Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong> Spend some time listening to Julian Treasure’s Ted Talk 5 Ways to Listen Better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding Questions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you take away from this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you listen now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you change about how you listen?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would that change your relationships?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong> Complete the Active Listening Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong> The youth participate in a scenario that contains multiple steps and provides examples of the importance of clear communication. This is skill is critical for planning, collaboration, and carrying out a project. This activity will build on previous activities; active listening, norms of collaboration, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding Questions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How successful did you feel your group was?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you better at communicating as the game went on?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did your group do well?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you do differently now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you convey information as a whole or in parts?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which role do you think was most difficult?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which role do you think was the most important? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were your particular frustrations as a _____?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you do differently?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has this game helped you think of ways you could be a better communicator in real life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is communication so important to humans?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong> Complete the building of “The Beast” activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Explore Viewpoints</strong></td>
<td><strong>Materials:</strong> Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As we proceed in working toward our project implementation, we need to see how members of the community think about the issue. Our mission today is to work to create a survey. This will allow us to gather</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
varying perspectives, so that we can understand them, consider them, and address them in our project.

Lesson on writing a good survey question, then divide into pairs - draw a demographic (mentor will come up with some samples of citizens to survey) write three survey questions that will help our team to understand opinions, concerns, and questions that people have about our project focus.

Until we meet again, administer the informal survey to ten varied and random people in the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Vulnerability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity: Restorative Circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have youth sit in a circle with a talking piece and a visual to focus on. Cue the group to take three breaths and focus on the visual. Ask the group to indicate how they are feeling using a 1-5 as indicated with their feelings and then open the circle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding Questions:
- Step in if you’ve (share if you like):
  - Experienced loss
  - Recovered from a serious illness
  - Felt alone
  - Felt angry at authority
  - Challenged someone
  - Made a big mistake
  - Relied on someone
  - Worked through a large problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Failing Safely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This activity will provide youth with a discussion around setting goals and what to do if you do not meet those goals. The objective is to discuss SMART goals, but also facilitate a discussion around their emotions of failure or feeling / being vulnerable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding Questions:
1. What do you do when you feel overwhelmed?
2. What resources do you have?
3. How would you ask for help?
4. What are your goals for your future? Where do you see yourself at the end of this school year? In a couple of years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking stick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Circles (Boyes-Watson &amp; Pranis, 2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Failing Safely a Haiku Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Chart paper/markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Paper/pencils/pens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20
5. How do we get through hard situations?

**Activity**: Failing Safely a Haiku

SMART Goals, Understanding vulnerability,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Identifying Mentors - Peer to Peer, Adult Leaders, and Intergenerational</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong>: The youth participate in an activity that helps them to build a definition of a mentor and youth mentors. Youth need mentors but also can be mentors, community builders, help with family settings, and youth/adult partnerships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding Questions</strong>: Who is a person who you trust or feel like you can talk to? Why is that person important to you? What qualities does that person have that makes them so important to you? Write down those qualities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Roles of a Mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 3 x 5 index cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chart paper and markers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies</strong>: Mentoring, Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Identifying Community Pain</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong>: Needs/Wants Diagram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have youth identify needs and wants of the community as well as the emotion surrounding that. For negative emotions have students examine why. Use these needs and wants to identify community pain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong>: Needs/Wants Diagram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post its</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2.4 Examine Disconnected Citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Identify barriers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What problems will we have accomplishing our goal?</td>
<td>Materials:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding questions</td>
<td>4. Index cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What would make this hard to fix?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What would you fix first?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How would you try to fix it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What would be the hardest part?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Who from your list could help you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Who else could help?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Who might not help?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Brainstorm on index card any possible problems to accomplishing goal for each green change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sort into groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. We can solve this</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. We need help and we know how to get the help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. We need help and we do not know who to get to help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective: Identify barriers**

Socratic Seminar
- For discussions all participant will sit in a circle
- The purpose of a Socratic Seminar is to achieve a deeper understanding about the ideas and values being presented. In the Seminar, participants systematically question and examine issues and principles related to a particular content, and articulate different points-of-view. The group conversation assists participants in constructing meaning through disciplined analysis, interpretation, listening, and participation.

Exit slip: after participating in the discussion, youth will be asked to write down 1 or 2 issues that they would like to work to solve in this project.
## 2.5 Chart Community Infrastructure and Policy Makers

### Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Identify mentors and partners</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin by introducing the various community resources that can work as partners to our overall mission. Youth will learn about all of the partners in Appendix</td>
<td>Materials: Several Copies of Graphic Organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Introduce the support networks in the community and what they do</td>
<td>Strategy: Think, Pair, Share (Ritchhart, R., 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Have youth divide into groups to brainstorm how they could contribute to support each of the potential partners within the mission of their youth group</td>
<td>Community Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Full Group share out “What makes local partners important in being a changemaker?”</td>
<td>Materials: Several Copies of Graphic Organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Write an invitation to the partners to come to a potluck at a future meeting (to be determined by each group’s readiness) to meet the local youth group and talk with them about the upcoming project. Youth and partners will eat round table style and share the group’s focus and intended outcomes.</td>
<td>Strategy: Think, Pair, Share</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ponder until we meet again: Think about your place in the world and what you observe about the things that are working and the things that could use attention. Don’t stifle your ideas, consider community heritage or social justice needs. Community heritage refers to place, identity, and history of a community, while social justice refers to action to correct an inequity of some kind.
2.6 Research Potential Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Engaging and Coordinate with Partners</strong>&lt;br&gt;Potluck! During dinner table discussions with partners, sell them on our project as best as you can, but take time to listen to suggestions that the partners may have for helping our group achieve its desired result.</td>
<td>Materials:&lt;br&gt;Tables/chairs&lt;br&gt;Paper&lt;br&gt;Strategy&lt;br&gt;Potluck (Palmer, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Support mentors and partners</strong>&lt;br&gt;Send thank you cards for coming to the potluck with pictures of the group in the card&lt;br&gt;Give them an update on the project&lt;br&gt;Invite them to attend sessions</td>
<td>Materials:&lt;br&gt;Thank you notes&lt;br&gt;Stamps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Sustain mentor and partner relationships</strong>&lt;br&gt;Guiding Questions:&lt;br&gt;1. Who are we working with?&lt;br&gt;2. How can we contact them?&lt;br&gt;3. What can they do for us?</td>
<td>Materials:&lt;br&gt;Check in ”Google Keep”&lt;br&gt;1. Digital post its with who (name of partner/contact info) and what (what they are doing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Sustain mentor and partner relationships</strong>&lt;br&gt;Materials:&lt;br&gt;W-Partners Organizer, markers, existing partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2.7 Choosing Project Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objective: Identify Issue</strong></th>
<th><strong>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify each issue area</td>
<td>Materials:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop SMART Goal for issues identified</td>
<td>2. Yellow, green, purple post its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Materials:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Once issue is chosen the participant(s) must develop a SMART Goal for the change. Fill in any S and M at this time</td>
<td>Large paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Markers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Which of these ideas is most important to you?</td>
<td><strong>Strategy:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What would you do to change this?</td>
<td>Chalk Talk (Ritchhart, R., 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How could you do that?</td>
<td>Appendix XIV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objective: Identify issues/perspectives</strong></th>
<th><strong>Materials:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalk Talk</td>
<td>Large paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompts - written largely for youth to see:</td>
<td>Markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Consider your community. What place, identity, or history is important?</td>
<td><strong>Strategy:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is there any place, identity, or history that your community should work harder to preserve?</td>
<td>Chalk Talk (Ritchhart, R., 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is there an issue or issues affecting your peers in the community that you feel is important to improve?</td>
<td>Appendix XIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth will be asked to respond to the prompts by thinking about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• What ideas come to mind when you consider this idea, question, or problem?
• What connections can you make to others’ responses?
• What questions arise as you think about the ideas and consider the responses and comments of others?

a. Begin “Chalk talk” with a silent conversation conducted on paper. This routine ensures that every voice is heard rather than just the voices of the few youth raising their hands. This routine teaches youth to build understanding in a collaborative way by having all youth put forth their ideas, then question one another, and develop those ideas further. Because it is conducted in silence, and somewhat anonymously, this allows certain youth to share more ideas and take risks they might not otherwise take.

1. Set up – Write each prompt on a large piece of chart paper and place them on tables along with markers. Decide if you want youth to move as a group from table to table or just wander independently. Choose how much time to spend for each round.

2. Present the Chalk Talk prompt – Invite youth to read the prompt, then think about and write their reactions, ideas, and questions on the pieces of chart paper. On subsequent rounds, encourage students to read and add comments to each other’s responses.

3. Circulate – If you are having youth rotate in groups or individually, give them 5 minutes to read and respond and then rotate to another table.

4. Share the thinking – Have youth return to their original tables and read what others wrote on their “Chalk Talk.” Discuss what were the common issues? What questions arose? How did everyone’s thinking develop as they went from table to table?

Follow up by discussing the community heritage or social justice issues that arose in the process. As the conversation continues, try grouping some of the issues and narrowing.
Whatever number of things naturally come to the top, keep those as possibilities as the process continues next meeting.

To ponder until will meet again: What came up that you felt particularly excited about? What are some possible ideas for addressing the need? Who might be able to help work toward change? What reasons might people have to oppose the change that you are presenting?

To begin this session, the narrowed results of the brainstorming session will be re-displayed. As youth enter, they will be encouraged to revisit each idea and to add new ideas that may have emerged since the last session.

Enter slip - youth will take five minutes to write thoughts/concerns on a check in slip. During discussion mentor will be encouraged to read through them so that those that are not addressed during discussion, can be addressed anonymously at the end of the session.

Materials:
Enter/Exit Slips of scrap paper

Strategies:
Enter/Exit Slip
Socratic Seminar

**Objective: Select Project Focus**

Today is the day! As a team, we are going to talk through our options and choose a project to focus on developing through our time together.

After selecting a topic, we will start to develop the ideas.

To begin to think about the project focus, we will divide into teams and generate questions using a question matrix (appendix IX). Each team will then choose their most pressing questions to the group.

We’ll visit these questions in circle time:

→ What is the change that we wish to see in community heritage or social issues in our community?
→ Why is it the way it is now?
→ Who could be a helpful partner in making the change? How would they contribute?
→ What, in turn, can we do for those who partner with us? How can we make the partnership reciprocal?
→ What are some things that you would like to see improved?
→ What are some initial thoughts?
To ponder until will meet again: Which of the community partners would be good to enlist to help with the project?

**Objective: Research Issue**

Guiding questions
1. What do we know about our issue?
2. What do we want to know about our issue?
3. How can we find that out?
4. Who can help us with that?

**Materials:**
3. Paper, Markers
4. Graphic Organizer

**Objective: Research Issue**

In small groups, youths will tally the results of the surveys that they administered to the community members and draw conclusions based on the results.

Share findings in larger group. Together we will come up with some key words or concepts to research more closely. Partners will choose one or more to look into.

**Materials:**
- Chromebook Cart
- Internet Access
- Survey Results

**Strategy:**
Analyzing information

**Objective: Identify vision & mission**

Guiding questions
1. What makes you feel strong?
2. What makes you feel weak?
3. How do you work best?
4. What is the most important thing for this group to do?

**Materials:**
1. Paper
2. Pens
3. First, then, who, next diagram
4. Before, how, when diagram

**Strategies:**
1. Popcorn
Each participant writes something they think is important for the vision and mission and when we say popcorn they throw it at the leader. The leader takes the words and arranges them to create a mission and vision statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Identify vision &amp; mission</th>
<th>Materials: Paper with writing prompts in paragraph form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies: Snowball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each participant starts with one piece of paper and fills out the first section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor yells snowball and each participant throws their paper to someone else. That person then fills out the next section. This continues until all sections are complete. The group works together to formulate their mission and vision and reflect on what they have learned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Identify Learning Insights</th>
<th>Materials: Look how far we’ve come document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a visual representation of all of the insights the groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIT THREE: Forming Committees & Dividing Duties

- 3.1 Cultural Competence in Community Activism
- 3.2 Using Reflexive Practice
- 3.3 Rights & Roles of Citizenship
- 3.4 Design a Changemaking Plan
  - Bottom Up Process
  - Goal Setting (Solution Minded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Exploration &amp; Growth</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1 Cultural Competence in Community Activism</td>
<td>3.4 Design a Changemaking Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom Up Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal Setting (Solution Minded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Using Reflexive Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Rights &amp; Roles of Citizenship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
### 3.1 Cultural Competence in Community Activism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Objective: Identify culturally competent practices and viewpoints**  
Guiding questions  
1. Who would like this idea? Why?  
2. Who wouldn’t like this idea? Why?  
3. Who might get mad or have their feelings hurt? Why? | Materials:  
3. Paper, Markers, Graphic Organizer (Appendix II) |

| Objective: Identify culturally competent practices  
Guiding Questions  
 a. What do you like about this group?  
 b. What do you not like about this group?  
 c. What do you want to try?  
 d. Who do you like to work with?  
 e. What are you proud of?  
 f. What would you change? | Strategies:  
Plus/Delta Chart (Appendix IV)  
Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001 |

### 3.2 Using Reflexive Practice

| Objective: Introduce Reflexive Strategy  
5. Plus/Delta Chart (Appendix III)  
6. Guiding Questions  
 a. What do you like about this group?  
 b. What do you not like about this group?  
 c. What do you want to try?  
 d. Who do you like to work with?  
 e. What are you proud of?  
 f. What would you change? | 1. Materials:  
Markers, Graphic Organizer (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001) |
Objective: Introduce Reflexive Strategy

Today we are going to put the pieces together and think about how we have thought. First, we will revisit the key findings and ideas that you generated last session.

Based on what we’ve learned, we will now pivot to the following question:

What is our desired outcome?

Who can we engage?

How can we engage them and why should they help us (what will we give back?)

Besides partners in the community, what do we need?

Who has the power to make the change? How do we access that person(s) time?

What is:

1. The need we identified
2. The means to address it
3. The desired outcome

After we have narrowed this down, we will compose a “script” that we will be able to talk about with the partners who are coming to the potluck next session.

To ponder until we meet again: What may convince a partner to help with our project?

3.3 Rights & Roles of Citizenship

Objective: Citizenship

Activity:

In the YPEM process the definition of citizenship is built upon the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, “The model explicitly promotes the values of equity, social justice, self-knowledge, personal empowerment, collaboration, citizenship, and service” (HERI, 1996) How youth connect to language and terms is important to their empowerment process. This activity provides a deeper dive into the knowledge, skills, and characteristics of a citizen/community problem solver- their personal role as a citizen.

Materials:

1. Chart paper
2. Paper for student reflection
3. Markers
4. Pencils/pens for writing student reflection

### Guiding Questions:

1. How would you describe the community in which you live?
2. What does “environment” mean to you?
3. What issues have you observed in your community? (political, environmental social)
4. What are the characteristics of a ‘good’ citizen? Or “community problem solver”?

### Activity: A Word About “Citizenship” Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Explore Citizenship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What makes you a good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(brother/sister/roommate/daughter…)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What about living in your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house, are you a good person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to live with? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What about in your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighborhood. What makes a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good neighbor? What makes a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad neighbor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What kind of neighbors do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What about in your city?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your job as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person living in your city?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes a good citizen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes a not so good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citizen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What kind of citizen do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you want to be? What do you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think your responsibility is?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Objective: Explore youth citizenship

**YouTube Day!**

Today, we will watch stories of youth groups that have made change in their communities.

1. Pipeline
2. ICE sit in
3. Historic youth
4. Marjory Stoneman Douglas

We will stop and discuss certain strategies they use, what they did well, what we could learn from their experience.

### Materials:

- Nesting Circles Diagram
- Computer
- Internet
- Projector
- Screen
- Popcorn

### Strategies:

- Think Sheet
- Generating Questions (Ritchhart, 2015)
3.4 Design a Changemaking Plan

**Bottom Up Process**

**Goal Setting (Solution Minded)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Identify Planning Strategies</th>
<th>Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Build a Before/How diagram to determine which strategies are necessary for addressing the issue.</td>
<td>6. Before/How/When diagram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guiding questions**

- a. Before we can ________ what do we need to do?
- b. How can we do that?
- c. When does that need to be done?
- d. Who can help?
- e. Where do we start?
- f. What plan can we make to begin?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Identify strategies to implement project</th>
<th>Strategies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time to share out the things we talked about to the partners at last session.</td>
<td>Think Sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guiding questions:**

What can we learn from the collective list of ideas, questions, concerns, support that we heard?

How does our new information change the plan we drafted two sessions ago? What adjustments need to be made?

Are we considering:

1. Our objective
2. Our resources/survey results
3. Our partners

Next, we will develop a step-by-step plan of implementation, divide duties, and create a timeline. This will allow us to schedule our ultimate presentation to the person or people who have power to act on our mission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Implement initial project steps</th>
<th>Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-List things to be done before the presentation and assign those responsibilities to someone with dates that each step should be completed</td>
<td>Computer, internet, projector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Make contact with the group that we will present to and schedule the presentation of our ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Contact the partners with whom we will work and ask them to read over the final project goal and action steps, ask them for their advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Begin construction of presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIT FOUR: SOLICITING SUPPORT

4.1 Revising Vision & Plans
4.2 Implementing Project Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Exploration &amp; Growth</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1 Revising Vision &amp; Plans</td>
<td>4.2 Implementing Project Steps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
4.1 Revising Vision & Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Reflect on Findings</th>
<th>Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Revisit KWL chart (Appendix II)</td>
<td>7. Internet access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Specifically address the what did you learn portion</td>
<td>8. Devices to access internet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding questions
- a. Separate findings into things we can do, things we need help to do, things we can’t do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Analyze Findings/Revise Action Plan</th>
<th>Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guiding questions</td>
<td>6. First, then, who, next diagram (Appendix VII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. First we need to ….</td>
<td>7. Before, how, when diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Then….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Who helps….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Next we….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. After that….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Begin Action Plan

| Objective: Revisit norms | |
|--------------------------||
| 7. Revisit norms | |
| a. Make changes as necessary | |

| Objective: Reflect on Findings | |
|--------------------------------||
| 8. Revisit KWL chart (Appendix II) | |
| 9. Specifically address the what did you learn portion | |

Guiding questions
- a. Separate findings into things we can do, things we need help to do, things we can’t do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Analyze Findings/Revise Action Plan</th>
<th>Strategies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guiding questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>First we need to ….</td>
<td>10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Then….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Who helps….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Next we….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>After that….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective: Revisit norms**

8. Revisit norms

9. Develop norms using the words in sentences
   a. We will listen to each other and take turns talking. We will make a plan and write it down.
   b. If we don’t agree we will be nice and take a vote

**Objective: Identify Learning Insights**

Activities

1. Committee work on action items and agenda

Guiding questions

1. What problems are we encountering

2. What solutions can we use to address them

## 4.2 Implementing Project Steps

**PLAN**

**Objective: Implement Action Plan**

1. First we need to ….  
2. Then….  
3. Who helps….  
4. Next we….  
5. After that….  

**RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED**

Materials:

3. First, then, who, next diagram (Appendix VII)

4. Before, how, when diagram

Strategies:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Implement Action Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Responsibility Chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Check off to do list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Verify appointments/Committee reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding Questions:
1. Who are we working with?  
2. How can we contact them?  
3. What needs do we have  
4. What can they do for us?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Begin Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Set date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Work on presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rehearse presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Work with partners to make sure presentation represents the shared vision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding questions:
1. Does our presentation stay true to our mission as a group?  
2. What can we do to reflect our group’s mission and represent our group as leaders in this project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Implement Action Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials: Previously made Then What diagram and W-Person Diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 5.1 Presenting & Acting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective: Present Project</strong></td>
<td>Materials: Computers, action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies: Use <a href="http://www.prezi.com">www.prezi.com</a> to create an interactive plan to share with local officials about your action plan. Present to mentors and then to local officials and community partners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 5.2 Reflection

**Showcasing Positive Actions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POST-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

After implementing the YPEM, mentors could benefit from interviewing their youth members to determine to what extent leadership skills, perceptions, and attitudes about community service, leadership and changemaking shifted. Following are questions to help guide that discussion.

Adolescent Questions

4. What community issues do you think are important for your group to give attention to?
   i. Why do you feel that way?
   ii. Can you explain more?

5. Now that you’ve finished this project, if you wanted to make a change in your community, how would you start? What would you do to make it happen?

6. What role did you play in planning and beginning this project?

7. Did you feel like you met your goal?
   i. What would you change?
   ii. Which of these strategies did your group use?

8. How did working together as a group help make the project easier?
   i. How did working together as a group make the project harder?

9. What are the things your mentor did that helped your group meet the project goal?
   i. What partners in the community helped your group meet its goal?

10. When did you feel like your voice was heard during this project?
    i. Can you give an example?
    ii. What steps did the group take to accomplish the goal of the project?
    iii. What did you do about disagreements?

11. Let’s study this diagram a little. Notice that each circle represents “individual change,” “group change,” or “societal change.” Now, think about this project. What does this diagram mean to you?

12. What did you take away from this experience?
    i. Do you think that you have a better idea about how to make something happen in your community? Can you explain?
    ii. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Teen and Adult Questions

13. What personal and community issues are more important to you?
   i. Why do you feel that way?
   ii. Can you explain more?

14. Now that you’ve finished this project, if you wanted to make a change in your community, how would you start? What would you do to make it happen?

15. What role did you play in planning and beginning this project?

16. Did you feel like you met your goal?
   i. What would you change if you could?
   ii. What strategies worked the best?

17. How did working together as a group help or hinder the work in this project?

18. What skills did your mentor use during this process that helped you meet your goal?
   i. What partnerships did you use to help meet your goal?

19. When did you feel like your voice was heard during this project?
   i. Can you give an example?

20. What steps did the group take to accomplish the goal of the project?
   i. What did you do about disagreements?

21. Let’s study this diagram a little. Notice that each circle represents “individual change,” “group change,” or “societal change.” Now, think about this project. What does this diagram mean to you?

22. What did you take away from this experience?
   i. Do you think that you have a better idea about how to make something happen in your community? Can you explain?
   ii. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix I: Identifying An Issue

Who is affected?  

Why

Who can Help?

Lizza, 2016. Venture Team Building Activities.
## Appendix II: Know, Want to Know, Learn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Did We LEARN</th>
<th>What do We WANT to Know</th>
<th>What do We KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III: Plus Delta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plus</th>
<th>Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things that went well</td>
<td>Things we want to change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001
Appendix IV: Before/How/When Diagram
Appendix V: Nesting Circles Diagram
Appendix VI: Action Sequence Chart
Appendix VII: Question Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Where</td>
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<tr>
<td>What</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix VIII: Identifying Community Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic support - city and county offices</th>
<th>Service organizations</th>
<th>Local Businesses</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(For instance: Mayor, City Council, Police, Firefighters, Senate/House representatives, City Departments: Parks/Rec, Animal Control, etc.)</td>
<td>Kiwana’s, Lion’s/Lioness, Optimist, Rotary</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Public school systems in the area, private schools, home school communities, technical educations, post-secondary education in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>Public Libraries &amp; Archives</td>
<td>Local Media Outlets</td>
<td>Area Religious Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNR, Forestry Department, USGS, Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IX: Think-Pair-Share

Discuss the community partnerships below. Are there some missing? For each partnership, consider ways that the partners could be allies for your youth group’s mission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic support - city and county offices</th>
<th>Service organizations</th>
<th>Local Businesses</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(For instance: Mayor, City Council, Police, Firefighters, Senate/House representatives, City Departments: Parks/Rec, Animal Control, etc.)</td>
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<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Public school systems in the area, private schools, home school communities, technical educations, post-secondary education in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>Public Libraries &amp; Archives</td>
<td>Local Media Outlets</td>
<td>Area Religious Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNR, Forestry Department, USGS, Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Think**

On your own, write ideas you have about how your youth group could benefit from collaborating with some of the community members. Consider how your group could support them and how they could support your group:

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________________________
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

**Pair**
Discuss your ideas with the people in your small group. Put a check by any ideas, above, that someone in your group also wrote down. Then, write down ideas your group had that you did not have:

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________________________

**Share**
Review all of your ideas and circle the one you think is most important. One of you will share this idea with the whole group.

As you listen to the ideas of the whole group, write down more ideas you liked:

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________________________
Appendix X: Group Dynamics Exercise

It is a Neapolitan World
Valuing Human Diversity
Philoptochos Leadership Institute

The Neapolitan Quiz

Even as obvious as some differences are—age, sex, race—none of there is the major cause of communication breakdown. That distinction goes to personality conflict. Ask yourself, “Have you ever had a personality conflict with another person?” Almost everyone has. When communication fails at work, rarely is it caused by lack of technical skill or lack of desire to do the job; usually, it is because of personality differences. And when communication breaks down at home, rarely is it due to lack of concern or lack of love; usually, it is the result of personality conflict.

The following questionnaire measures your style of interpersonal relations, an important dimension of personality. It will allow you to better understand yourself and the people in your world. This understanding can help prevent communication breakdown and close communication gaps where they exist.

CHOCOLATE, VANILLA, OR STRAWBERRY—WHICH ARE YOU?
Directions:
→This questionnaire consists of 26 statements. There are no right or wrong answers. The right answers are your true opinions.
→For each statement, indicate which of the three alternatives, a, b or c, is most true or most important to you by circling a, b or c in the MOST column.
→Then choose the least true or least important of the three alternatives and circle its letter in the LEAST column.
→For every statement, be sure you circle one alternative in each column. If a is circled under MOST, then either b or c should be circled under LEAST.
→Do not skip any questions and do not debate too long over any one statement. Your first reaction is desired.
SCORING

Step 1
Add up the total circled for each column, and put these totals in the boxes marked T, P, and I. Each section should equal 26.

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<td>MOST</td>
<td>LEAST</td>
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<td>T</td>
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Step 2
Determine your scores for T, P and I by using the following formula: Score - 20 + MOST - LEAST. For example, if your T MOST was 20 and if your T LEAST was 12, your T score would be: 26 +20 - 12 = 34. Complete the following:

T score = 26 + ________________ - ________________ = ________________

T MOST

T LEAST

P score = 26 + ________________ - ________________ = ________________

P MOST

P LEAST

I score = 26 + ________________ - ________________ = ________________

I MOST

I LEAST

(Your total should equal 78.) TOTAL = ________________
INTERPRETATION

If your highest score is T, you are chocolate by personality type. If your highest score is P, you are vanilla. If your highest score is I, you are strawberry. If you have the same or nearly the same scores for all three, you are Neapolitan, giving you built-in versatility for dealing with different types of people. If your two high scores are T and I, this means there are two forces in your world asking you to be two different ways. One force is saying, “be chocolate,” and the other is saying, “be strawberry.” Although this can present problems, it can also be good if it allows you to accomplish your values and goals in life. Values and goals are more important than style of interpersonal relations. With this situation, it may be difficult for others to understand you because of the different signals you send.

WHY CHOCOLATE, VANILLA, AND STRAWBERRY?

This questionnaire measures style of interpersonal relations. The terms chocolate, vanilla and strawberry are used to make the point that all styles are equally good, even if they are different.

People accept different flavors of ice cream and appreciate the variety, but they do not always do the same in their relations with others. Indeed, when faced with people who are different, they may send out signals (perhaps subconsciously), “I am right, and you are wrong.” When this happens, a subtle psychological communication gap results.

If you remember that the world is full of different types of people, and that chocolate, vanilla and strawberry are equally good, this will reduce any tendency to feel superior and will improve your ability to communicate with others.

*Personality tests can help people learn more about themselves, understand other people, and improve human relations. However, they should not be used as a basis for decision making unless proved to be fake-proof, valid, and reliable: (1) Answers may be inaccurate (an unemployed parent may feel justified in lying on an employment test); (2) The relationship between test scores and other behaviors may be unknown or lack dependability (there may be no relationship between test scores and job performance); (3) Different days may produce different results (mood and recent experience may influence scores).
TYPES OF CULTURE AND TYPES OF PEOPLE

People are products of culture—their family culture, their town, the culture of their country. As such, your style of interpersonal relations is influenced by how you were raised. Societies teach and reinforce behavior traits, so that just as individuals are chocolate, vanilla and strawberry, whole groups of people are chocolate, vanilla and strawberry.

Chocolate cultures are formal and structured, such as Old England, Germany and Hungary. Strawberry cultures are individualistic, such as the French, Italians and Greeks. Vanilla cultures are melting-post societies, such as the United States.

If is important to note that there are exceptions to these generalizations. For instance, it is possible for a Frenchman to be more chocolate than the most chocolate German, and there may be a Hungarian who is more strawberry than the most strawberry Italian. It is also important to note that human traits vary in degrees, so that any one person may be a mixture of several types. While you may be primarily vanilla, you may have a few chocolate and strawberry characteristics as well.

Regardless of origin or degree, however, there are certain characteristics that distinguish the chocolate, vanilla and strawberry styles of interpersonal relations. The following describes each of the three personality types on ten important dimensions**. As you read these descriptions, think about the people with whom you live and work. The descriptions will help explain why one person is so easy for you to understand, although you may not necessarily agree with him or her (that person is like you), and why another person is so difficult for you to understand (that person is different from you). Think also about the ways these different types of people should be treated to bring out their best. **(See following page)
NEAPOLITAN WORLD SURVEY

Identify your type and all 3 scores (TPI) on the Neapolitan World Personal Survey below. HOW? Identify the type based on the directions by carefully totaling your scores.

T=TRADITIONAL P=PARTICIPATIVE I=INDEPENDENT

Type= Chocolate, Vanilla, Strawberry, Neapolitan (scores the same or all close by one point),

Note: two scores that are close by two or three points should be identified as a swirl such as chocolate/strawberry. Add T score below Add P score below Add I Score below Identify Type as noted above
Appendix XI: Question Matrix

Directions: Use this matrix to generate questions you would like to answer about the project topic. Start each question by using who, what, when, where, why or how with one of the words in the left column. Place your question in the box where the word at the top intersects with the word on the left. As we work through the project and find the answers to your questions, we can write the answer on a sticky note and cover up the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
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Appendix XII: Evaluating a Community Interest Survey

**Directions:** Tally the results of the survey for each question below, and then use the back of the page to discuss what these things may mean and how they can be addressed throughout the project. Once you have organized your thoughts, we will come together in the bigger group to see what kind of questions have emerged that may require more research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Summarize key comments</th>
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Appendix XIII: Think Sheet

In each square, record discussion points regarding the topic. (This will be done together on large paper)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our objective</th>
<th>Our resources</th>
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<th>Our information from surveys/research</th>
<th>Our partners</th>
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NEXT, we will consider the timeline. We are in Stage three of YPEM, so we are eight weeks away from presenting our project. What specific steps need to happen before then?
Appendix XIV: Wordless Acting

**Nonverbal Activity 1: Wordless Acting**

1. Separate students into groups of two.
2. Determine one student in each group as student A, and one as student B.
3. Give each student a copy of the following script.
4. Student A will read his/her lines out loud, but student B will communicate his/her lines in a nonverbal way.
5. Provide B with a secret emotional distraction that is written on a piece of paper. For example, student B may be in a rush, may be really bored, or maybe feeling guilty.
6. After the dialogue, ask each student A to guess what emotion was affecting the student’s partner student B.

**Dialogue:**

A: Have you seen my book? I can’t remember where I put it.
B: Which one?
A: The murder mystery. The one you borrowed.
B: Is this it?
A: No. It’s the one you borrowed.
B. I did not!
A: Maybe it’s under the chair. Can you look?
B: OK--just give me a minute.
A: How long are you going to be?
B: Geez, why so impatient?

I hate when you get bossy.
A: Forget it. I’ll find it myself.
B: Wait—I found it!
Appendix XV: Setting Norms of Collaboration

**Norms of Collaboration**

1. Pausing
2. Paraphrasing
3. Posing Questions
4. Putting Ideas on the Table
5. Providing Data
6. Paying Attention to Self and Others
7. Presuming Positive Intentions
Appendix XVI: Journey Lines

May want to write a narrative about one of the instances.

Directions

62
Appendix XVII: Two Truths and a Lie

**Two Truths and a Lie**

Time Required: 15-30 minutes

Start out by having every team member secretly write down two truths about themselves and one lie on a small piece of paper – Do not reveal to anyone what you wrote down! Once each person has completed this step, allow 10-15 minutes for open conversation – much like a cocktail party – where everyone quizzes each other on their three questions. The idea is to convince others that your lie is actually a truth, while on the other hand, you try to guess other people's truths/lies by asking them questions. Don't reveal your truths or lie to anyone – even if the majority of the office already has it figured out! After the conversational period, gather in a circle and one by one repeat each one of your three statements and have the group vote on which one they think is the lie. You can play this game competitively and award points for each lie you guess or for stump[ing other players on your own lie. This game helps to encourage better communication in the office, as well as it lets you get to know your coworkers better.
Appendix XVIII: Guiding Questions Worksheet

- Based off this text, what is cultural competence?

- How might the greater meanings and ideas from this text apply to a larger community context?

- Why is cultural competence important? How might we need this in the work we are about to embark on?

- What are some of the successes of culturally competent organizations?

- How is using a culturally competent lens in this work the socially just thing to do?

- What are your greatest takeaways from the text?

- How does using a culturally competent lens influence the social justice/heritage need/topic we are discussing?
Appendix XIX Action Planning Template

Goals
what are we trying to accomplish – concrete, tangible, winnable. What does victory look like?
What do you want the headline to read the next day?

Target
who has the power to decide? Who are we trying to impact/move, what is strategic reason for it/them. If there are multiple sites, which is best suited for an action?

Messaging & Demands
what do we want our target to do, what do we want them to know.
Are there other audiences besides the target?

Messenger
who is delivering our message? An impacted person or community leader working on a particular issue is always more powerful and credible than a talking head spokesperson. Is there a process for getting feedback/response from target?

Mobilization
how many people do we need? What are our turnout goals? Who will we reach out to—people, groups etc? What are the recruitment plan, rap, commitment, reminder and follow-up plan? I use a 50% rule...that is what I expect will turn out based on the commitments. So if 100 people say yes, expect 50!

Scenario
what will happen, what does it look like? What are the beginning, middle and end? How will message/story be told – visuals, words, props, and signs?
Appendix XX: Defining Roles

Roles of a Mentor

Key Concepts

- Identify qualities of effective mentors.
- To explore roles that mentors can play in the lives of children and youth.

Supplies

- 3 x 5 index cards
- Chart paper and markers

Procedures:

1. Give each participant an index card. Ask them to:
   a. Identify one person, preferably someone who is not a relative, who is/was a mentor for them.
   b. Think about why that person is/was important to them.
   c. What qualities does that person have that makes them so valued and write down three qualities.

Note – your students may not have had a mentor at this point or understand the concept of a mentor. Depending on the group of youth the youth leader can use examples of adults that play an important role within the youth’s life. This might include people within the local community, a coach, person at their church, friend, big brother, big sister, positive role model, resource, guide, someone at school, or at an afterschool program.

Reframe the questions –

- d. Who is a person who you trust or feel like you can talk to?
- e. Why is that person important to you?
- f. What qualities does that person have that makes them so important to you? Write down those qualities.

3. Have participants talk about the mentor or person they have identified and the qualities they valued. As they speak, list those qualities on the chart paper. When a quality is repeated, put a check mark next to each time it is mentioned. (For example, the first time someone says, “good listener”, write that phrase. Each time someone else identifies this quality in his or her mentor put a check mark by the phrase.)

4. Review the items on the list. Note which were mentioned most often. Then have the youth identify which qualities might be categorized as “communication skills”, such as listening, talking, and asking questions. This categorizing helps the youth to realize the different qualities of a mentor and a mentee.
5. Some sources note that a mentor is NOT a parent, teacher, and counselor, but allow the youth to explore the difference between these examples and others the group provides – before NO or a specific definition of a mentor is provided to the group. Allow the youth to define what they see is are the qualifications of a mentor.

6. Allow time for the youth to talk about how youth can be mentors to other youth. What qualities that they admire in these “mentors” do they feel they might possess? Which do they think they could work on in developing? What do they think is important in mentoring another youth?

Youth as Mentors

Youth Community Builders — Youth can mentor adults about all sorts of issues, including their culture, communities, education and more. In these relationships, adults are committed to learning from young people about issues, actions, ideas and wisdom that adults should know, and often do not know.

Youth/Adult Partnerships — Focused on creating equitable relationships between young people and adults, youth/adult partnerships can happen in nonprofits, schools, government agencies and other places that want to promote youth engagement.

Family Settings — Acknowledging adults don’t know everything because of their ages or titles in life, mentorships at home can extend across family lines and home settings. Grandparents can learn from young people, parents can listen to their children for guidance, and families can reflect everyone’s priorities.

Definitions:

Mentoring –

1. comes from the Greek word meaning “enduring”—is defined as a trusted and sustained relationship between two or more people.

2. Is often one component of a program that involves other elements, such as tutoring or life skills training and coaching. The supportive, healthy relationships formed between mentors and mentees are both immediate and long-term and contribute to a host of benefits for mentors and mentee

3. takes place between young persons (i.e., mentees) and older or more experienced persons (i.e., mentors) who are acting in a non-professional helping capacity to provide relationship-based support that benefits one or more areas of the mentee’s development.

Mentoring Principles –

- The first principle of ethical and safe mentoring suggests that mentors should promote the welfare and safety of their mentees.

- The second principle is being trustworthy and responsible; helping mentors translate this concept in the context of a mentoring relationship is key.

- Third is that mentors need to act with integrity.
Fourth, mentors need to promote justice and not engage in discrimination towards their mentees.

Finally, mentors need to respect the rights and dignity of their mentees and their mentees’ families.
A Word About “Citizenship” Activity

*Activity adapted from Earth Force Curriculum L.1: Youth For A Change and Earth Force Launch! Overview*

Key Concepts
- Community
- Environmental Issue
- Environmental Citizen
- Citizenship

Guiding Questions
- How would you describe the community in which you live?
- What does “environment” mean to you?
- What issues have you observed?
- What are the characteristics of a ‘good’ citizen? Or “community problem solver”

Supplies:
- Chart paper
- Paper for student reflection
- Markers
- Pencils/pens for writing student reflection

Procedures:
1. Provide each student with paper and a pen or pencil. Ask the students the following questions:
   a. How would you describe the community in which you live?
   b. What does “environment” mean to you?
   c. What issues have you observed in your community? (political, environmental social)
   d. What are the characteristics of a ‘good’ citizen?
2. Depending on the size of the group, work through the question by small discussion and then facilitate the answers with the larger group.
3. Provide space for discussion and use prompting questions to the youth to build on their individual thoughts to a larger group conversation.
4. If citizen is not appropriate for your students, consider using “Community Problem Solver”, or allowing the students to come up with their own term.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

5. What are Attributes of a Community Problem Solver? What knowledge, skills, or characteristics do you are important?
   a. Review the Knowledge, Skills, and Characteristics with the group.

Attributes of an Environmental Citizen

KNOWLEDGE
1. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS - Awareness of current local environmental issues, needs, and resources.
2. HISTORICAL AWARENESS - Understanding how the past ecological events, political decisions and economy have affected the environment.
3. POLICY & PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT - Understanding that environmental issues might be influenced by public and private policies and community practices.
4. STAKEHOLDERS & INTEREST GROUPS - Awareness of the decision-makers who can influence public and private policies and community practices associated with an environmental issue.
5. CIVIC ABILITY - Understanding of the roles that citizens can play in shaping policies or community practices to help the environment.
6. PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE - Understanding the mission, scope and process of Earth Force.
7. INCLUSIVITY Understanding the importance of integrating diverse experiences and perspectives into all aspects of learning.

SKILLS
10. RESEARCH - Ability to conduct a thorough and balanced investigation of the root causes of a local environmental and/or community issue.
11. ANALYSIS - Ability to assess various sources of information for credibility and bias.
12. COMMUNICATION - Ability to defend a position on an environmental issue both orally and in writing.
13. COOPERATION - Ability to work cooperatively with peers and adults toward a common end.
14. ADVOCACY - Ability to bring about a plan for sustainable improvements to the environment or community.
15. PROBLEM-SOLVING - Ability to make wise decisions and plans to solve environmental and community issues through the use of sound research.
16. REFLECTION - Ability to think critically about experiences so lessons can be learned.
KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH

CHARACTER TRAITS

3. CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY - Sense of personal responsibility for and commitment to the long-term well-being of the environment and the community.
4. CONFIDENCE - Belief in one’s abilities to make a positive change in the environment and community.
5. INTERDEPENDENCE - Belief that it is both valuable and necessary to work together for a common purpose.
6. COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS - Sense of bonding with and respect for educators, community leaders, and other adults.
7. ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT - Personal sense of achievement and accomplishment in and out of school
8. SOCIAL RESPECT - Willingness to respectfully consider diverse points of view.
9. PROGRAM AFFINITY - Sense of connectedness to a national movement of students involved in Earth Force.

The goal is to provide a foundation for what problems they see within their community, build a vocabulary of knowledge, skills, and characteristics, and begin to understand community based changes.

Reflection

In the YPEM process the definition is built off the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, “The model explicitly promotes the values of equity, social justice, self-knowledge, personal empowerment, collaboration, citizenship, and service” (HERI, 1996)

Citizenship is the process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity. To be a good citizen is to work for positive change on behalf of others and the community. Citizenship thus acknowledges the interdependence of all who are involved in or affected by these efforts. It recognizes that the common purpose of the group must incorporate a sense of concern for the rights and welfare of all those who might be affected by the group’s efforts. Good citizenship thus recognizes that effective democracy involves individual responsibility as well as individual rights. (HERI, 1996)
Earth Force Curriculum notes:

We often use the term “environmental citizen” as shorthand for the collection of long-term outcomes that we hope to nurture among students who participate in Earth Force. Before delineating what we mean by this, it’s important to note what we don’t mean:

- We don’t limit our understanding of “citizen” to the narrow sense of the term—one who is legally recognized as a citizen of a state or nation. Rather, we use the broader definition of the term—one who is a member of a community. Thus, our notion of “citizenship” has little to do with legal status and everything to do with the stuff it takes to meaningfully participate in a community.
- Nonetheless, citizenship—at least as we conceptualize it—is central to the Earth Force experience. If this terminology is not appropriate for your students, consider using “Community Problem Solver”, or allowing the students to come up with their own term.

Appendix XXII: Youth Influence In Community Change

What is Youth Voice?

Key Concepts
3. Youth Voice
4. Community
5. Citizenship

Guiding Questions
- How would you describe youth voice?
- What does youth voice mean to you?
- What have you observed when you talk to adults about your ideas?
- What how are youth recognized in your community?

Supplies:
- Internet – ability to project video to youth with audio
- Chart paper
- Paper for student reflection
- Markers
- Pencils/pens for writing student reflection

Procedures
3. Provide each student with paper and a pen or pencil. Ask the students the following questions:
   a. How would you describe youth voice?
   b. What does youth voice mean to you?
   c. What have you observed when you talk to adults about your ideas?
   d. What role do youth play within the community?
4. Depending on the size of the group, work through the question by small discussion and then facilitate the answers with the larger group.
5. Watch the following videos:
   a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCjFQMrr5oNo
      i. Anika Manzoor, United States - Anika co-founded the Youth Activism Project (YAP) to promote teen-led action to advance the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. In 2017, 120 YAP-trained activists in the US and Mali led campaigns on girls’ education, gun violence, sex trafficking, and other issues.
ii. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKzBh5893ag&app=desktop
   1. Youth Voice Plus Youth Vote | Wendy Lesko | TEDxYouth@Columbia - Wendy has collaborated with hundreds of organizations to deepen youth engagement including the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, International Festival for Arts & Ideas, Jóvenes en Acción, Sugar Free Kids Maryland, Youth Empowered Solutions and the U.S. Department of State. Her expertise in youth-led advocacy and effective community action is enhanced by her prior professional experience as a community organizer with Cesar Chavez and a reporter covering the U.S. Congress. This talk was given at a TEDx event using the TED conference format but independently organized by a local community. Learn more at https://www.ted.com/tedx

6. What are their thoughts on youth voice after watching those two videos? Record their thoughts on chart paper so the common ideas can be captured.

7. What is our group definition of youth voice? From this conversation develop a definition of youth voice for the group. The following are examples of definitions that can be shared with the group.

   a. Youth Voice is the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society. – Adam Fletcher, Washington Youth Voice Handbook

   b. According to Earth Force, youth voice can look like:
      i. Bringing young people out into their environment to observe the pros and cons of their surroundings.
      ii. Asking young people to talk about why they view something as a positive or negative. It is surprising how often youth can make a great argument for why something that’s typically negative can be an asset to a community or visa versa.
      iii. Allowing young people to guide group decision-making to determine the direction of their learning.
      iv. Encouraging peer-to-peer mentoring, like pairing older students with younger students or asking students to work in pairs, learning together.

8. How will the group move forward to respect each other but also their ‘youth voice’ moving forward?

YouthActionNet (2018); Fletcher, (2006); EarthForce (2019)
Appendix XXIII: Facilitating Safety

**Haiku Activity**

Key Concepts

Setting SMART goals

- Developing individual goals to build and sustain
- Understanding vulnerability
- Understanding failure – how to move forward when something goes wrong

Guiding Questions

- What do you do when you feel overwhelmed?
- What resources do you have?
- How would you ask for help?
- What are your goals for your future? Where do you see yourself at the end of this school year? In a couple of years?
- How do we get through hard situations?

Supplies:

- Chart paper/markers
- Post – its
- Paper/pencils/pens

This activity will provide youth with a discussion around setting goals. The objective is to discuss SMART goals, but also facilitate a discussion around their emotions of failure or feeling / being vulnerable.

According to the Sundance Canyon Academy,

One of the best descriptions on what it means to be vulnerable has to be Brené Brown’s TED Talk. She spent over six years studying what it means to be vulnerable and how it is important. Her conclusion is feelings of shame and fear prevent someone from accessing vulnerability. Her research showed her that the people who are able to overcome the negative feelings are the ones who are also able to believe in their worth. This sense of worthiness allows them to be vulnerable and express themselves in healing ways.

Procedures:

11. Discuss the concept of goal setting SMART goals - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. What are some of their goals?
12. Have each person write down a goal. It might be to get an A in a class or to make the football team, etc. Then they need to break down that goal – is it SMART?
   a. Specific – is the goal specific enough?
   b. Measurable – how will they measure that goal?
   c. Achievable – can they reach that goal? How?
   d. Relevant – is the goal relevant to them? To their future? Their overall success?
   e. Timely – when will this goal happen?
13. Then as a group establish a road map with these goals. The content of the goals can be a roadmap for the month, year – a timeline for group.

14. What if they do not reach these goals? What does that feel like? What if you don’t make the basketball team? Discuss the concept of failure. What does that feel like?
   c. What is something you worry about?
   d. Positive words are helpful.
   e. It is ok, to not be ok.
   f. Writing can get your feeling out – help to manage the ways you get mad or upset.

14. Writing a haiku to express themselves. At this point the group will have discussed goals, but also the what if – when those goals are not reached. They will now create a Haiku to practice a way to express their feelings – through poetry.

15. Define a haiku. A haiku is a form of Japanese poetry. Haikus have a specific syllable structure. The first line has 5 syllables, the second line has 7 syllables, and the last line has 5 syllables. Outline the following on the chart paper for a visual

   a. Choose Your Topic: ________________________
   b. Brainstorm words - Brainstorm a list of words about the topic. Next to each word, write the number of syllables.
      i. Write Your Draft
      ii. Title _______,
      iii. Line 1 (5 syllables) ___________________,
      iv. Line 2 (7 syllables), ___________________,
      v. Line 3 (5 syllables) ___________________.

8. If the students have a hard time creating their own – you can start with a group haiku. Have them pick a topic – that is relevant to the recent discussion. What do they do when they are mad? What is a goal of theirs?

9. Once everyone is completed – post the haikus around the room. The group could do a spoken word or gallery walk activity to review each one.

REFERENCES


KIDS THESE DAYS: A MODEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH


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