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Focus on Youth

Awakening YOUTH VOICE & ENGAGEMENT in COMMUNITY HERITAGE through the IMPLEMENTATION of a YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EMPOWERMENT MODEL

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A Dissertation submitted to
The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

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Dissertation Committee

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ABSTRACT

Citizen engagement in community and public life is vital to a healthy democracy. Young people have a unique place in community citizenry; they are often not yet able to vote or serve in powerful roles, but they have much at stake for the future. Youth can be powerful allies to a participatory culture. The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to arm youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) to identify and address a community heritage or social justice need. This study used interviews and observations with individuals and focus groups to observe and record the process of empowerment of youth with YPEM based on attributes defined in the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Astin, 1996, HERI, 1996). The researcher coded emerging themes to determine what interventions were most effective and whether youth or youth mentors experienced a perceptual change about youth voice, youth engagement, or youth empowerment through the implementation of YPEM. YPEM helped youth and adult mentors cultivate youth voices by providing time and space for them to address a community heritage or social justice need in their community. To maximize progress, four factors are key. First, strong youth leaders -- who are either elected, appointed, or emerge naturally through the process are needed. Second, safe space and trust building are central to a group's ability to engage. Third, the research showed that when community partnerships are strong, the empowerment process is maximized. Finally, adult mentors who are present but remain in the background can support youth voice and facilitate engagement. YPEM led engaged youth to experience

empowerment through community action. Prior to the implementation of YPEM strategies, the case study group had not been effective at influencing change from the bottom up. YPEM changed this scenario. YPEM gave youth an opportunity to identify a need in their community, and plan, organize, and implement actions to make the change happen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I remember sitting at my graduation for my second Master's degree. The time had come for the hooding of the doctoral candidates. I looked at my mother's face still covered with tears of joy as she had just witnessed me receiving my Master's in Counseling. I knew then that I had one more degree in me--I would get my doctorate degree, for my mother. Thank you, Mom, for being my biggest fan. Your prayers have carried me all of my life and I know without a shadow of a doubt that this degree is a direct result of that. Your strength can be compared to non-other and I am so grateful that you were chosen to be my mother. I am because of you. To my princess, Miyah Nicolle, Mommy loves you so much! I thank you for your confidence in me, your patience, your assistance, and even your obedience. You've been right there with me every step of the way. Always know that everything I do is for you. I love you to the moon and back, over and over again. To my brothers, Love and Robert (R.I.P.), words can't express all that we have been through as a family. Robert, we lost you to gun violence at the tender age of 15. This degree is for you. I hope I made you proud. Love, my rock, you're home. Thank you for always reminding me that I am your Chocolate Diamond. You truly make me believe that I can do anything. I adore you.

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I must thank the faculty mentor team from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Dr. Theresa Coble, Dr. Phyllis Balcerzek, Dr. Carl Hoagland, Dr. Timothy Makubuya, and Dr. Keith Miller for both this opportunity and their support. To my original dissertation team, Dr. J.C. Wagner-Romero, Dr. Mary Gillis (I will never, ever forget you and your kindness toward Miyah and I, we are family), Dr. Lindsay Lehmann-Clemens, Dr. Melanie Canady, Dr. Amanda Dworak Rowland, and Dr. Curlinda Mitchell Blacksheep, I walked into a room lost and trying to find my place and you all accepted me and told me I had a home. I couldn't have done it without each of you. Thank you.

To every student/youth that I have taught, counseled, mentored, or just had the pleasure of knowing: this is a tribute to you. A representation of a deeply rooted passion to hear you and to awaken your inner voices. Thank you all for allowing me to grow and for remaining my reason to continue making a difference.

Last but certainly not least, my greatest thanks goes to God. I do not look like what I have been through in life, and I know it is due to your abundant grace, mercy, and favor. Many gave up on me, some said I wouldn't make it, but you have always let me know that I am someone special. Thank you for molding me into who you created me to be. To God be the Glory for the things he has done!

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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. 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, pass policies while the lived experiences of youth are not always considered. This research drew guidance from prior studies to explore how adults could use 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 student youth group from Parkland, Florida is an example of how young

people could be a powerful ally to democracy. In response to the student led marches that began in 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 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, 20l7; 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 & Sheridan, 2011), citizenship education (Boyte, 2013; Lukensmeyer, 2012), and trust building (Putnam, 2015). These strategies worked by engaging youth in active thinking and 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 history of a community, while social justice refers to action taken to correct an inequity of some kind.

To date, the research that addresses the impact of participatory youth involves students learning to engage in local needs that involve infrastructure planning, but the research is limited in identifying an effective model for trained mentors to use in helping students engage in 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, the seven original researchers in this study developed a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM). This YPEM was used during the case study discussed in this dissertation. 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 empower them to share their ideas with those in their local community who hold the power to take action. The researcher and original team developed YPEM informed by the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996). The SCM identified three levels of engagement: individual, group, and society. Each

level is tied to seven core values that provide purpose and lead to change (HERI, 1996). These define the eight key traits of effective changemakers. Specific strategies, like those previously mentioned, emerged through development of partnerships, and designing and implementing an action plan. The researcher in this study proposed 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). Researchers in this study originally consisted of seven doctoral students who worked dilligently together through the development and duration of this project. As referenced above, due to unforeseen circumstances, information and results were reported in both a co-authored dissertation (including six of the researchers) and this single authored dissertation from the seventh researcher.

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 seven separate youth groups that included urban, suburban, rural, and tribal areas from varied cultural and socioeconomic circumstances. Researchers relied heavily on the groups to engage the members in culturally competent ways. The youth groups that participated in the study also provided for diverse representation since they included traditionally underrepresented youth. The diversity among the youth groups 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 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, 2016; Oreopoulos, 2003; Putnam, 2015; Sachs, 2011; Stiglitz, America's 1% Problem, 2012; Thompson, 2016; Tieken, 2017; Vance, 2016).

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 & Metioui, 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, America's 1% Problem, 2012). In order to understand the voice of a youth generation, we must dig deeper into the perceptions and definitions of political activity among young people and explore and observe reasons and arguments for their perceptions and definitions (Borge 2019). These problems require sustained generational input, so priming 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 disconnect 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 also 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 versatile 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 maintain 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).

Having been raised in a poverty-stricken broken community, the researcher involved in this study is passionate about community heritage and social justice issues, which influenced perception of the interactions with the participants. The researcher was cognizant of potential for bias in action research. Bias was minimized by establishing guidelines for triangulation and an external audit of the study. With the bias control guidelines in place, the researcher opted for the action research in order to gain qualitative insight through observation of and interviews with youth from diverse backgrounds who are often underrepresented in research studies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

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.

Research Questions:

Based on research regarding youth empowerment the following central question emerged:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect

a) Youth perceptions of their ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?
b) Adult involvement in facilitating youth to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. To what extent 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 Astin and Heri's Social Change Theory Model (1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

This study used qualitative data to explore how each stage of YPEM affects actions of youth and their mentors in active participation in their communities. The researcher 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) (Astin, 1996). The SCM is based upon the following premises:

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

(Bonous-Hammarth, 1996; HERI, 1996; Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2017). 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

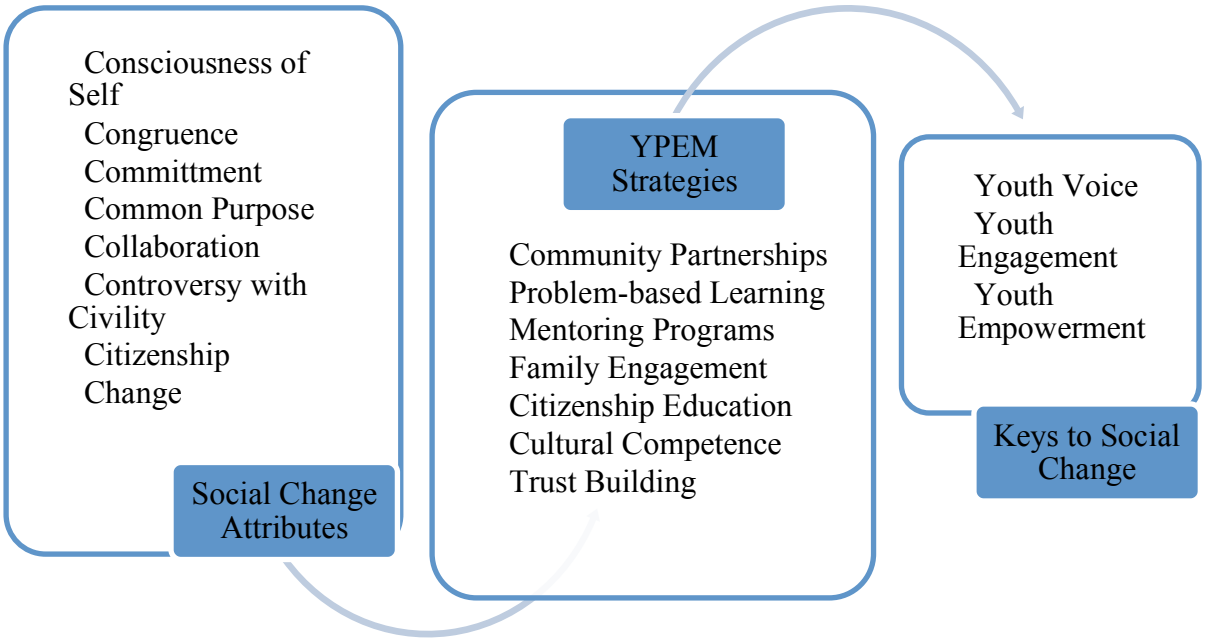
> leadership focus on the lead or position of leadership, the SCM is grounded in the postindustrial paradigm and assumes that leadership describes people's collaborative process, not a position.

To develop YPEM, the researcher followed the basic framework of Astin's model which is embedded with collaboration and concerned with fostering positive social change from the perspective of the individual, the group, and the community (Astin, 1996). To effect changes needed to address the central phenomenon of this study, observations and interviews were used 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. Figure 1 below is a visual representation of the process.

Figure 1

Theory of Youth Voice-Engagement-Empowerment Model.



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 (see Appendix I for detailed case studies). From these interviews and observations, and through a method of participatory action research, the researcher 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.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

OVERVIEW

This research originated with an examination of an observed disconnect 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. The connection between young adults and local officials and how young adults can impact change within government was explored. Also, research studies that highlighted the positive and negative impact that citizen engagement, or lack thereof, has on community health, economics, wellness, upward mobility, and education were explored as well. The research also examined several barriers to meaningful community engagement, such as low levels of cultural competence, lack of buy-in or investment from both adult and youth citizens, lack of leadership, and fractured relationships between formal and informal education opportunities for youth. 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 were identified. More specifically, the researcher identified such negative consequences as the 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. Strategies used in these communities were identified and a model developed to assist youth in accessing their voice

and engaging with partners in order to effect change in their communities.

CURRENT TRENDS IN YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL OFFICIALS

Two major works influenced 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. 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 a vast amount of 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 began to investigate and placed heavy emphasis on the changes in the family, the pressure that placed on time and money, and how economic policies seemed to make it increasingly difficult for families to make ends 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).

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES LINKED TO DISENGAGED COMMUNITIES?

Struggling communities share common symptoms, but how this correlates 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 is also a huge factor to consider when researching 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, 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). In the article "The Politics of Illegal Dumping: An Environmental Justice Framework," Pellow notes 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). This racial inequality in the neighborhood environments of black youth increases their 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, states,

> 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).

This same report talks about the Inter-Tribal Youth Climate Leadership Congress which convenes over 100 Native youth each year to raise environmental awareness in tribal communities; the goal is 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 Knowledge (TEK) (Carr, Kenefic, & Ranco, 2017; Center for Native American Youth, State of the Native Youth Report, 2016).

This need for reconnection to the environment is also needed 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. There relocations often increased the distance from their family experiences of fields, gardens, and woods. An increased fear of nature and became the emotional legacy of a people who had been kidnapped from their homelands, and then forced to make the journey across the Atlantic Ocean 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).

One of the 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). In the *Journal of Forestry* article, "Wabanaki Youth in Science (WaYS): A Tribal Mentoring and Educational Program Integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western Science," the authors noted a recent report by Sharik et al. (2015) which highlighted the challenges that native students face, which included 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).

The learning environment, 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). The article, "Community-Based Participatory Research: Conducting a Formative Assessment of Factors that Influence Youth Wellness in the Hualapai Community," provides evidence of 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, ropes challenge course, 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 that 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 impact 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 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 using the same methods. This approach is ineffective and represents an ignorance regarding the ways in which these cultures function (Brown, 2007; Brown & Fischer, 2017; Hebblethwaithe 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. Literature has been published on the importance of cultural competence and diversity, as a tool needed for challenging 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. As stated, 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, by people not having the ability to 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 and because of the leaders' lack of knowledge about her constituents' culture. 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. Research 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 lacking community resources in the form of 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 was cited as a major barrier for

empowering youth across all settings due to its crippling nature with 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,

> 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 may, again, be 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). The book, *Red Power rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the origins of native activism (Vol. 5)*, (Shreve, 2011), traces the origins of Red Power back to the student activism of the National Youth Council (NIYC). 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 theses 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 divided 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 one of the most important conditions to support youth empowerment. Space indicates a home, a trust, a literal place where youth can be safe to create, endure, and explore. Without space there is no home to grow from. 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 in them to be able to complete tasks and action plans to 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. Participatory action research builds on partnerships and relationships, it builds trust among participants, and it 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, all of which set 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, the most successful groups look at youth as an important member of their society. They consider their input not just important but 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 more authentic engagements. 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. A mindset 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 such as cohesive relationships between civic, local, and environmental groups, and informal partnerships such as connections between people 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, the balance is thrown off and one side's growth feels 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 such as 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 such activities as 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 run day to day. 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).

An integral partnership is the role of mentors. The mentors of these youth groups 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).

YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EMPOWERMENT MODEL PROTOTYPE

Through the culminating research presented, the researcher (and original team) developed a model to support mentors and youth in their quest to address social justice, civic, and heritage issues within their community. The Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) was setup in five stages. The stages started from planting

a seed in a group that grew into an independent unit that could support itself. 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 Stage One. 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 are divided by age groups to increase engagement. The groups are labeled as Adolescents (8-13) and Teens and Young Adults (14-25). The guidebook (Appendix J) offers suggested strategies as well as observational logs to support mentor work with youth.

Figure 2

Prototype Youth Participatory Empowerment Model.

Table 1: Youth Participatory Empowerment Model

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
DEVELOP	**DO**	**STUDY**	**REFLECT**	**ACT**
Partnerships ○ Identify mentors & partners Exploration & Growth ○ Identify barriers ○ Explore youth perspectives Actions ○ Form group ○ Establish norms ○ Select project focus	Partnerships ○ Engage mentors & partners Exploration & Growth ○ Introduce reflexive & culturally competent practices Actions ○ Build trust ○ Research issues related to project ○ Explore viewpoints	Partnerships ○ Observe mentors & partners Exploration & Growth ○ Identify strategies for project implementation Actions ○ Build trust ○ Explore youth citizenship ○ Implement initial components of project	Partnerships ○ Support mentors & partners Exploration & Growth ○ Reflect on findings & team dynamics ○ Analyze results Actions ○ Revise team norms ○ Revise action plan	Partnerships ○ Sustain mentorships & partnerships Exploration & Growth ○ Identify common vision & mission ○ Identify learning insights Actions ○ Implement action plan ○ Begin project
Youth Voice		**Youth Engagement**		**Youth Empowerment**
Consciousness of Self				
Congruence				
Commitment				
Collaboration				
Common Purpose				
		Controversy with Civility		
		Citizenship		
				Change
Social Change Theory of Leadership Model				

Sources: (Anderson & Herr, 2010; Astin, 1996; HERI, 1996; Kemmis, 1982)
Participatory Action Research:

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, Grounded Theory, and other qualitative methodologies. Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (2014) 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, a transformative worldview was used to guide the exploration and emergence of data. Transformative worldviews focus on the cohesive relationship between research and politics with the goal being to change policy or the political landscape. This worldview in particular 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). This worldview focused on

acknowledging and encouraging youth voice to enhance youth engagement with the intention of promoting social change. This process recognizes that there are differences in perspective on reality that are based on the varied situations and circumstances of people's experiences. For this reason, the research group and myself, chose to work with seven culturally distinctive youth groups across the nation (see Appendix I for information on the other six groups). Participants and the researcher 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 researcher in a position of analyzing their role in the research process to be aware of how involvement affected the relationship between the individual researcher and the participant. The researcher was cognizant of potential bias involved in being a participant observer. The conflict encouraged a cyclical model in which "the researcher 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 that have been excluded from the majority. Due to this exclusion, their experiences have not been fully acknowledged or researched. This worldview provided an outline to address these 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 data collection and analysis of the data, the creation of codes to analyze the data rather than hypotheses, development of theories to explain the phenomenon, explicit note-taking, 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 a firm belief 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 their cultures. Later it evolved into the study of people in general, focusing on their ability to describe their own 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. (Walters, 1980)

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 a variety of demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics. The researcher was hopeful that, through this practice, patterns would emerge that could be generalized to other settings. There is a general consensus about which attributes are included in qualitative research, which are identified in Table 1: Characteristics of Qualitative Research.

Table 1

Characteristics of Qualitative Research.

Table 1: *Characteristics of Qualitative Research*	
Natural Setting	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.
The Researcher is a Key Instrument	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.
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.	

A qualitative methodology was the best choice for this research due to the sensitive nature of the data which cannot be measured via surveys or other quantitative measures. The importance of engagement and changing perspectives cannot be measured using a numerical system. The phenomenological roots of qualitative design are most appropriate for the descriptive nature of the youth and adults' experiences within their action groups. In addition, 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 central question:

> How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect
> a) Youth perceptions of their ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?
> b) Adult involvement in facilitating youth to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. To what extent 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 Astin and Heri's Social Change Theory Model (1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

This 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. This was done 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 the observed phenomenon of fractured symbiotic relationships between communities and their citizens. The expected outcome was the development of a broadly applicable YPEM to empower youth to lead in community heritage and social justice engagement. Research was accomplished by working with youth groups from diverse populations throughout the United States. The youth and their mentors worked alongside the researcher to foster qualities of good leaders, including those skills needed to support healthy functioning groups as they engaged collaboratively in social change. The group, subject to this research, was located in St. Louis, Mo. and was unique in its demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics. Throughout this study, the researcher observed participants and documented current practices through field notes. The group was engaged through strategies supported by the SCM, based on where they were upon initial contact. The idea was to build youth leadership in the local community through YPEM, which could be applied broadly to other youth. First, the group was tasked with identifying a community heritage or social justice need that was specific to their community. Then the group worked through engagement strategies with the researcher, based on the SCM, to reach desired group goals and personal growth targets. To create a clear picture of the youth group's status quo, initial interviews were conducted via a focus group, which was a random sample of participants within the participating youth group. The researcher met with the group to explain the nature of the action research and the goal of the qualitative study, which was to empower youth and youth mentors with an action model to engage in adding youth voice to a group-defined community heritage or social justice need. The research-based engagement strategies guided the researcher in

helping the group to discuss, brainstorm, and define a need that they wanted addressed within their community. During the process of the study, the researcher observed how youth interacted with varied, researched strategies found in YPEM, 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 the researcher to be aware of needed adjustments in observation strategies, interview questions and techniques, and sequencing of the engagement model. The researcher documented the process and highlighted changes as they emerged. In addition to observation and field note documentations, the researcher also interviewed youth before and after implementation of engagement strategies to gauge whether or not youth felt confident in the strategy and what, if anything, they needed. Following the completion of the group's defined mission, the researcher conducted post-interviews with the group in order to document changes in attitudes, beliefs, confidence, and motivation among the youth. This was used to evaluate the engagement strategies in YPEM that were most useful and informed the evolution of YPEM.

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 an action researcher, the methodology followed "a spiral of action cycles in which one undertakes:

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;

> 4. To reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action on, through a succession of cycles." (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, p. 7)

During this process, components of the SCM were integrated as a theoretical guide for participatory action research. During Stage 1 of YPEM, Consciousness of Self was aligned with Congruence and continued through the research process. In addition, the participants identified a Common Purpose during Stage 1 which was focused on for the remainder of the research. During Stage 2, Commitment and Collaboration were integral to the success of the programing. During Stage 3, 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, YPEM has been updated. These updates reflect the outcomes observed through the research process.

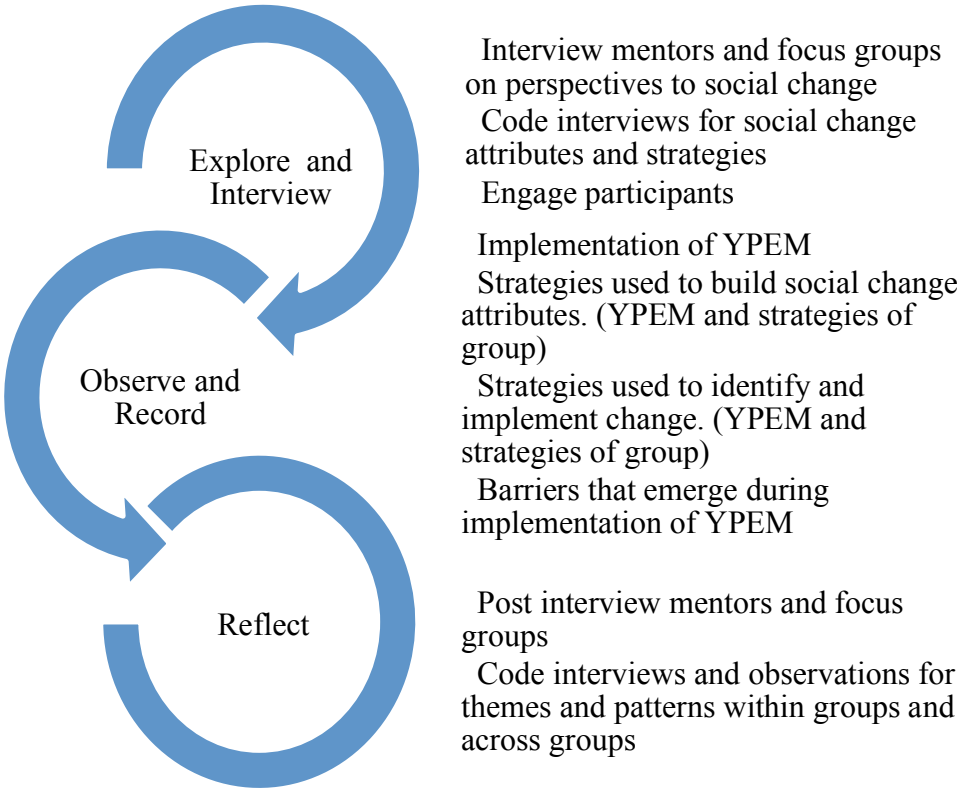
As previously stated, there was a possibility of researcher adaptation in the field as the project unfolded, but pre-and post-engagement interview questions helped guide the measurable results of the study. Those questions listed in the section below, were analyzed to determine how engagement strategies affected each youth group's members' perception of his or her ability to change a community heritage or social justice issue in a given community. This emerged through questions and observations that documented how youth responded to using research-based strategies in formal and informal educational settings, 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.

A visual model of the procedure for data collection and analysis, as well as case selection and final analysis of the research is presented in Figure 3. This shows the sequence of the study.

Interview Questions:

In *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* Brinkmann and Kvale note that the qualitative research interview is not a neutral medium that enables conversationalists to freely encounter each other, unaffected by the context. Rather, the interview is a mediator that makes possible certain ways of relating to one another and makes others very difficult. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Figure 3 *Data Collection*.



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 are listed in Appendix E. These questions were formatted to appeal to the ages of the participants within the groups. Therefore, two sets of questions were necessary to use language and structure that would engage younger participants as well as older participants. The researcher noted that youth participants from the ages of 14-25 could use the same question set, as their language systems are formally developed while a young child of eight may not have a fully developed formal language system and could be influenced by unfamilar language. Pre-intervention questions for the adult mentors of the youth groups were also developed and are described in Appendix F.

After the initial interview, the researcher 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 are listed in Appendix G, while the adult mentor post intervention questions are listed in Appendix H.

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. Participants were divided into groups by age: adolescent 8-13, and teen/young adult 14-25. In addition, these participants were selected because they represented demographics that are targeted in the research 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 disconnect disengaged youth and their community.

During the initial part of the action research, focus groups were used to conduct the interviews. Specific participants were chosen to show proportion in groupings and equal representation of varying viewpoints. In addition, adult mentors and participants were also interviewed individually or in small groups, virtually or in-person, to explore their perspectives as an adult working within youth groups.

The participant group for this research included eight high school students from the St. Louis area who were interested in entrepreneurship, creativity, community development, and design. The students were all a part of Creative Reaction Lab which educates, trains, and challenges youth to co-create solutions with Black and Latinx populations to design healthy and racially equitable communities. The city of St. Louis has an estimated population of 308,626 of which 47.9% are Black or African American

and 3.9% are Hispanic or Latino. Approximately twenty percent of the population is under the age of 18, while 27.6% of the population are living in poverty (St. Louis, Missouri Population 2019).

DATA COLLECTION

There is some common agreement today about the core characteristics that define qualitative research (Creswell, p. 185). In this research, there were a variety of characteristics considered in the data collection:

1. Natural setting: Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem understudy (Creswell, p. 185). Data was originally collected at seven culturally distinct sites.
2. Researcher as key instrument: 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, p. 185). The researcher was aware that their presence in the collection of data affected results. Interview questions developed by the researcher team and YPEM that was refined from the data collected through interviews with participants were used.

3. 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, p. 186). This researcher relied on interviews and observations.

Prior to the implementation of the action research plan, the researcher studied current peer-reviewed literature to build an initial YPEM that was used to facilitate the participatory group action research. To begin, the researcher contacted the youth and adult leaders of the group to establish consent and convey basic information about the climate, participation, elements, and risks of the research.

Focus groups were formed and the researcher conducted interviews with the youth and the mentors separately. The researcher had personal ties to the youth group as an educator in the community. The researcher attempted to maintain a facilitator role. The researcher strived to ensure that all decisions were made and implemented by the youth group and/or group mentors. Participants were located in a formal educational settings. The ages ranged from 15-17 with a focus on youth from struggling communities, as defined in the literature review.

Once the focus group interviews were complete, the responses were coded and analyzed for themes and used to set a baseline to show growth during the study. The researcher met with the group 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, the researcher observed and recorded youth participants' and mentors' actions and statements to document their participation, attitudes, beliefs and motivation. Upon completion of the implementation, the researcher conducted a post-engagement interview with the focus group and mentor. The results from both sets of interviews and the observation notes were analyzed for patterns and themes that were present across the original seven groups (see Table 4 for cross-reference table) to determine the most effective strategies for increasing youth voice and engagement to empower youth. Strategies that were implemented in stages of YPEM included:

Partnerships:

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

Exploration & Growth:

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

Actions:

1. Problem-based learning (Boyte, 2013; Lokey-Vega & Bonderson, 2017; Ritchhart, 2015)
2. Citizenship education (Boyte, 2013; Lukensmeyer, 2012)

3. Trust building (Putnam, 2015)

The researcher understood that social change is an organic process that is unique to youth all round. While the group had access to these strategies, but cultural competence dictates that they relied heavily on particular strategies and not on others. Also, there were some existing strategies, which were captured through observations and interviews. The information was then used at the end of the study to determine which strategies were most effective in awakening student voice, engagement, and empowerment. The research group followed a consistent process described below:

> Creative Reaction Lab - St. Louis, Missouri - An introductory email was sent to the program founder and CEO explaining the research process. The mentor was excited about the idea and was willing to be a participant. The youth group, made up of St. Louis College Prep students, was already formed and the mentor gave permission for the group to be a part of the study. The executive director of St. Louis College Prep also gave written consent for the students to participate. An existing prior educational relationship allowed for the researcher to have access to the study group. Observations and face to face pre and post interviews took place at a central location. Communication between the mentor and researcher mainly took place via email and phone to set meeting dates and times.

DATA ANALYSIS

The following section provides an overview of data analysis. The central question for the research is:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect

a) Youth perceptions of their ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?
b) Adult involvement in facilitating youth to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. To what extent 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 Astin and Heri's Social Change Theory Model (1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

Pre-and post- interviews and observations were analyzed based on these questions. The interviews were transcribed and coded initially using the Trint tool, but then were reviewed by the researcher to confirm 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). The researcher and team in this study followed this advice and created codes for the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM) and YPEM strategies. Codes were generated to evaluate

participants' knowledge and awareness of the SCM based upon the definition of the model's core values (HERI, 1996):

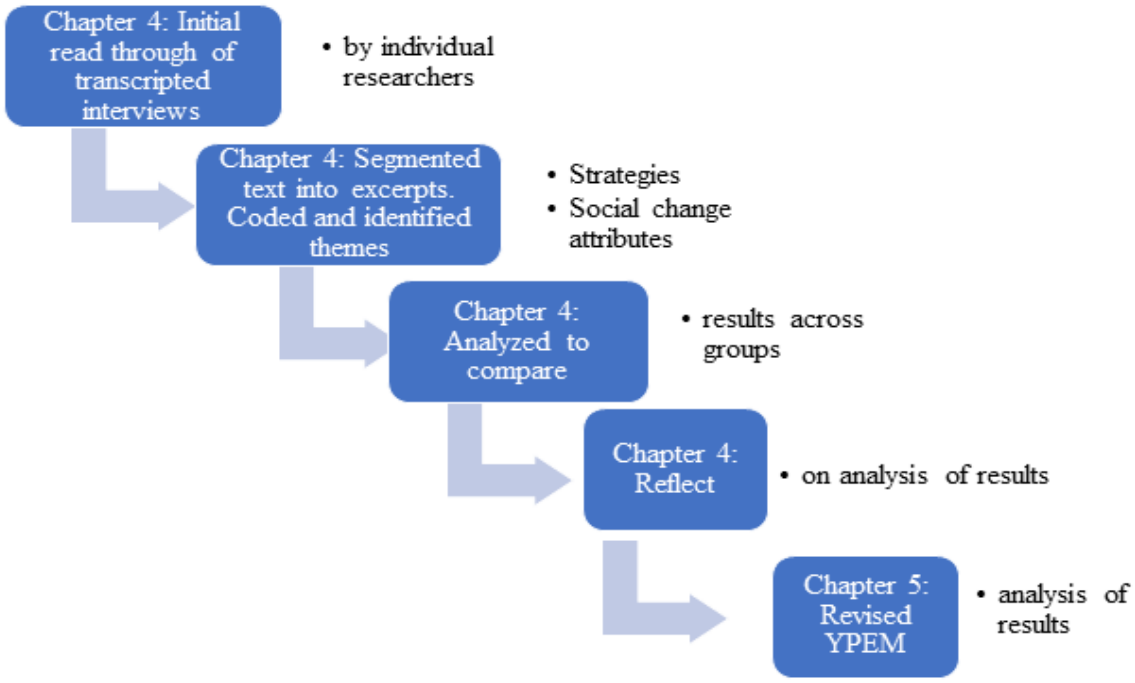
- Individual Values
    - Consciousness of Self
    - Congruence
    - Commitment
- Group Process Values
    - Collaboration
    - Common Purpose
    - Controversy with Civility
- Community/Societal Values
    - Citizenship
    - CHANGE (is the value hub, gives meaning and purpose to the seven C's)

In the qualitative analysis, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously (Merriam, 1998). Anecdotal notes obtained during the interviews were coded and analyzed using an initial coding system and analyzed for similar themes. The codes were maintained within a codebook. Being that this project was initially part of a larger group, it is important to note how the coding process took place. Initially, the research group coded one interview together to develop consistency among all researchers regarding code meaning and application. Following the initial coding, each researcher coded their own interviews as well as another team members. A reflective methodology was used during the analysis to gather information on similar themes.

An analysis was performed within each interview and then across the interviews to analyze themes 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 (Figure 4).

Figure 4 *Data Analysis: Coding Process*.



The analysis of the themes and strategies within the interviews provided data that were then compared in order to recognize similarities. These similarities were then incorporated as a part of the final process to update YPEM.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In qualitative research, the researcher seeks to find validity in the experiment's ability to transfer to a variety of settings and populations (generalization). Due to the nature of qualitative research being unique in its methods of data collection and sample selection, external validity can be threatened. In this study, great care was taken to provide a thick description of the research process, and a full report of the care used in the collection process was documented. By doing so, the reliability and internal validity remained stable (Payne & Williams, 2005). The researcher followed the ethical structure approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

In order to guarantee soundness and rigor in this study, the researcher used a variety of techniques. The researcher used thick descriptions of procedures and content to convey the findings of the research and assist in generalization (Payne & Williams, 2005). Between method triangulation was used to converge different data points and alleviate the chance of personal biases influencing data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The group was provided an excerpt from their case study to review for validity. This process was critical for allowing the group to verify that the data based upon the content matched their intent. The research involved collecting data from people and about people. All of these experiences introduced a possibility for subjective interpretations of the

phenomenona being studied and created a potential for bias (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000).

The 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, the permission for conducting the research was obtained, this included signed consent forms as needed. The researcher had an academic advisor, who was aware of the researcher's background and approved the research study. The researchers' committee members were also familiar with the study and were supportive of moving forward with the project. They advised the researcher on procedures and data analysis as needed throughout the process.

The topic of this study did fall into the sensitive category because within the group, there were subjects who were not over eighteen. The researcher 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 interviews with the participants were audio taped and the study was conducted in a normal social setting on location. This process was drafted as a part of the IRB approval process.

An informed consent form was drafted. The form stated that the participants were guaranteed certain rights, agreed to be involved in the study, and acknowledged their

rights are protected. A statement related to informed consent was affixed to the web interview, and was provided for the in-person interview; the statement reflects compliance by participation. The anonymity of participants was protected by coding each interview and observation and keeping the responses confidential. The participants in the qualitative study had the choice of anonymity. Participants were assigned 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. Participants were told summary data would be disseminated to the professional community.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

This section provides information concerning the researcher positionality. 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 for the Creative Reaction Lab group is employed at the high school where the youth participants attend. The mentor and researcher did not work in the same building or organization. Both were however familiar with the youth as the group was pre-existing. During the course of the research, the researcher remained an observer. The primary role of leadership for the community heritage project was upon the youth with guidance from the mentor.

This included an overview of the case study, and how the SCM helped to build YPEM. It also explained the sampling process for selecting youth participating in the program and their youth mentor, 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 qualitative action research study was to empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) to identify and address a community heritage or social justice need. The first three chapters introduced the current state of civic engagement for adults and youth and outlined a compelling rationale to empower emerging generations. The researcher and original team further explored issues related to disengaged citizens, the consequences of that disengagement in communities, and the barriers that prevent engagement. Through a review of literature, the researcher and original team (1) identified research-based strategies that are integral to the success of youth empowerment programing, and (2) developed a model to guide youth and mentors through a process of empowerment. YPEM served as the basis for the research conducted in this study (see Appendix B). In chapter three, the researcher outlined the methodology design used to guide site selection, data collection and analysis. In this chapter, the single author researcher presents research findings providing insight into YPEM implementation and outcomes through the presentation and analysis of their respective case study.

The researcher conducted this qualitative study using data collected from a case study conducted in St. Louis, MO. Data was collected via pre-intervention and post-intervention interviews with the group mentor and participants. These interviews varied from focus group to individual interviews. The researcher worked alongside the group to

help implement YPEM stages, record observations of the strategies used, and facilitated identifying and addressing needs as they arose. The identities of the participants were kept confidential with pseudonyms. Due to the fact that this research and case study was done originally as a group of seven, the results from the researcher's case study are presented below, first as a separate case study, then as a cross-case analysis that synthesize all seven case study results. Participant demographic information is presented first, followed by case specific findings. These results address the following research questions:

Central Question:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect

a) Youth perceptions of their ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?
b) Adult involvement in facilitating youth to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. To what extent 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 Astin and Heri's Social Change Theory Model (1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

YPEM CASE STUDY

The following case study tells the story of YPEM. The researcher shared a

guidebook (Appendix J) 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

Participant Youth Information.

CASE STUDY: CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH			
Tony	16	Missouri	African American
Jose	15	Missouri	Hispanic
Erika	15	Missouri	African American
Alex	17	Missouri	African American
Kimberly	17	Missouri	African American
Crissy	17	Missouri	African American
Kyle	17	Missouri	African American
Tammy	16	Missouri	Biracial

CASE STUDY: CREATIVE REACTION 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. Many of the students have experienced trauma and were academically behind.

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 perception (and adult faciliation) of their ability to influence a heritage or social justice issue?"

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. She is the 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.

CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH

St. Louis, Missouri

LOCATION

The Creative Reaction Lab's Design to Better our Community is a nonprofit organization educating and deploying youth leadership to challenge racial inequities impacting Black and Latinx populations based in St. Louis, MO.

Group mission

Creative Reaction Lab was founded in response to the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri (August 2014) in the form of a 24-hour design challenge.

Creative Reaction's Mission: "Goals include educating, training, and challenging youth to co-create solutions with Black and Latinx populations to design healthy and racially equitable communities.

Demographics of community

The city of St. Louis has an estimated population of 308,626 of which 47.9% are Black or African American and 3.9% are Hispanic or Latino. 20.2% of the population is under the age of 18. The median household income is $61,571 and there is 27.6% of the population living in poverty (St. Louis, Missouri Population 2019).

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 encouraement 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 as an individual. It took a lot of patience working in the group that I was working with. Not in a negative way but patience and also realizing that once you put enough effort or once you put enough energy 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 tyring 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. Speaking from experience, it is disheartening how often times youth who experience trauma sort of become numb to it and just keep living. Reflecting as an adult on my childhood, I realize that there were

several traumatic events that took place all before I was even a teenager. While others may respond to trauma in various ways as I continued to grow, hearing about and experiencing trauma became a "norm" for me.

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.

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 in the following quote:

> 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 3

Effective Strategies for Participant Group.

Strategy	**Example**
Think, Pair, Share	Youth thought individually about issues in the community, partnered with someone to discuss and narrow choices, and then shared out whole group. Youth reflected on the project, partnered up to discuss and shared through whole group.
Communication	Students brainstormed ideas, repeating back what other members said, asked clarifying questions. Youth leader sometimes cold 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.
Youth voice/ empowerment	"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 (Appendix D) 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 as seen in the following quotes:

> It helped us because we had a lot of mental diversity...It was really nice to have different people's ideas come to the table so we could come up with different things, rather than one person coming up with the whole plan.

> We had our ups and downs but at the end of the day, we knew what we wanted to do.

When moments of controversy with civility arose, the following approach described by one of the youths proved to be effective,

> 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).

Conclusion

The knowledge and impacts of 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 11 is a quick reference to the themes across all sites in the original study (the other six case studies are included in Appendix I as well). It shows variations that support that those working with youth in communities must be driven by a sense of cultural competence. Each community and the population it serves is unique and those who are working with youth will be most inclined to empower youth if they are congnizant of the community expectations and values. The youth in these seven sites were tasked with identifying a community heritage or social justice need in their community. Some of the groups chose to begin with heavy topics that are of most importance in their lives, while others chose to focus on a specific project that will aid in education, inclusion, and preservation of heritage.

Table 4:

A Quick Cross-reference for the Themes that Emerged Across all Seven Case

CASE STUDY ONE: NAVAJO YOUTH
Theme One: Youth/Young adult participants were ready and able to fill an adult leadership vacuum.
Theme Two: Youth leaders created a positive communication environment by focusing on civility, conflict resolution, and self-awareness.
Theme Three: Youth leaders facilitated an exploration of community within the context of loss -An understanding of community required Navajo youth to think deeply about their

place and the issues embedded in their day-to-day life. -An understanding of community required Navajo youth to grapple with a history of cultural loss. -An understanding of "community" helped Navajo youth understand traditional perspectives with the night sky and share the perspectives with others
CASE STUDY TWO: UNITED NATIONAL INDIAN TRIBAL YOUTH (UNITY)
Theme One: 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.
Theme Two: For UNITY participants, intergenerational collaboration recognized youth as having significant roles within the community through respect and confidence
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:
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
CASE STUDY THREE: 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
CASE STUDY FOUR: 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.
CASE STUDY FIVE: CREATIVE REACTION YOUTH
Theme One: In environments with significant trauma, it is critical to recognize and support youth leadership
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
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.
Theme Four: By tackling issues, youth gain more awareness about topics such as mental illness in youth and become more relatable to their peers
CASE STUDY SIX: 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, tendency for parents to overrule youth suggestions, and 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.
CASE STUDY SEVEN: 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: A 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

Studies

In chapter five, the results discussed in chapter four will be evaluated through the lens of the updated version of YPEM. This new model was built from the content of the interviews, researcher observation and reflection notes of the seven case studies. The researcher and team analyzed all emergent themes across the seven demographic locations and found similarities to empowering youth. Observations about essential components of YPEM emerged from the data. They are displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5:

Observations of essential components to YPEM.

Observation One	Youth leadership Strong youth leadership was essential to providing a process 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.

Observation Two:	Trust and safety 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 which in turn empowered them to engage in social justice and heritage issues.
Observation Three	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.
Observation Four:	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.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to arm youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) to identify and engage a community heritage or social justice need. This chapter includes discussion of major findings as related to the literature on youth voice, engagement, and empowerment. Also included is the revised YPEM, the researcher's reflections on the process, implications for practice, limitations and future research, and recommendations.

This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the research questions:

CENTRAL QUESTION:

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect

a) Youth perceptions of their ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?
b) Adult involvement in facilitating youth to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?

RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS:

1. To what extent 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 Astin and Heri's Social Change Theory Model (1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

The researcher chose this demographic group to highlight disadvantaged populations and diverse cultures. As a product of a broken community, the researcher related to what was happening in this area/group. Experiences such as losing a brother at the tender age of 15 to gang violence, having another brother be incarcerated for 26 years, growing up poverty-stricken, and even as an adult being the first and only black teacher at a predominately white school, ignited a passion and a fire, that never died and ultimately played a huge part in the drive behind this project. Despite varying outcomes in the original different groups, four common themes emerged through this case study. The following explores those themes in depth.

Based on the findings from the research the following themes emerged: Observation One: Youth leadership, Strong youth leadership was essential to providing a process 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). Leadership roles varied between having single identified leaders to a more collaborative style 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 individual goals by each group. Youth developed their voice, which led youth to feel valued which motivated engagement and facilitated change. This case study group had a single leader who emerged naturally through the process due to their skill set and influence. When the youth leader was absent, the reasearcher or mentor would have to step in to facilitate work.

The knowledge gained from this data shows that multiple leadership styles can work, as long as they are youth driven, youth led, and youth centered (Allaman & Powers, 2012). Since youth leadership is rarely based on attainment of power, but rather often focused on change, it is easy to presume that fluid leadership styles would be successful (Abdullah, Foster-Fishman, Harfst, Hockin, Litchty, Mortensen, & Warsinske, 2014). Issues that affected progress toward youth empowerment included: (1) adult impact on youth led activities; (2) attendance in meetings; and (3) confidence in the leadership role, and strong cultural identity. In addition, youth who had strong ties to

other adults, like family, educators, or mentors, were more successful in leading the group. It is important for youth to be able to voice the issues that are important to them so that they can become catalysts for change (Allaman & Powers, 2012). In order for youth to be successful in producing change, they need to be able to exercise their voice and put them into action. Thus, changing the community for the better. This cycles back into a sense of worth, development of positive relationship skills, and change in attitudes that will support their achievement throughout their lives (Borden, Perkins, & Serido, 2011). When young people learn to use their voice, amazing things are able to happen. Youth voice is one of the critical pieces of youth engagement. It is essential that adults and mentors working with youth examine critically how youth voice is present, facilitated, and incorporated. When this happens and youth voice is taken seriously, youth can help organizations create authentic programs, policies and meaningful recommendations for their communities (Brown & Gabriel, 2019). Leadership qualities are not necessarily role-bound. As the youth in this study often pointed out, self-motivation was often the driving force behind their behaviors. Despite trauma they may have faced, despite the trauma that was even present throughout my life, there was still a leader within that always provide motivation to keep striving, keep fighting for better. Adult leaders allowing and encouraging youth to turn that trauma into triumph is a game changer in producing effective youth community leaders.

Observation Two: Trust and safety 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 which in turn empowered them to engage in social justice and heritage issues.

Trust was identified as essential in the success of the group. Trust must be present in professional relationships for children to disclose personal information and begin to deal with effects of experiences (Davies 2019). Due to the effect of traumatic experiences shared among them, trust building was imperative when empowering youth to meet their goals. Trauma impacted the youth's ability to trust adults, each other, and the community that they lived in. Traumatic experiences included whitewashed cultural identity, intergenerational trauma, violence within the community, systemic racism, lack of access to quality education, and racial cleansing. 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 these youth face each day in order to support them and help them change communities at large.

Due to previous experiences, safety was also a concern. Creating safe physical, emotional, and social spaces help cultivate the meaningful relationships needed, between youth and others, that support them in unpacking varying community contexts and social needs (Vaughan, 2014). This safe space needed 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 allowed youth to flourish. Trust is often regarded as a precursor to co-operation, action, or participation. Trust is the feeling that a person is sufficiently trustworthy for social action to occur. Trust exists between individuals or individuals and institutions, rather than resting within the individual (Davies 2019). However, it does not stop there; environment and surroundings must also

be considered. 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, S. A., Nygreen, K., & Sanchez, P., 2006). In significant research with children about their trust in professionals, the lens has been narrowly focused upon the child and the professional, often without sufficient consideration of the broader context in which the child is located and the other important relationships that have a bearing on trust relations. Developing relational thinking around trust and focusing on children's biographical experiences, conceptualization of trust calls us to consider the impact of children's family and community relationships and contexts on their trust relations (Davies 2019).

The figurative space - the ability to share common experiences without judgement - was more essential because of the emotional connections that arose through the process. Procedures to set up safe and secure environments addressed multiple tiers including adult interactions with youth, support for their endeavors, and the adult's 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 progress of empowerment moved forward.

The presence of trust and safety permitted the youth participants to engage in risk taking that opened avenues for them to explore their feelings and maximize their potential to meet goals. When provided with a safe space to fail without judgement or further traumatization, confidence began to grow. The development and consistent renewal of trust and the consistency of safe space allowed the youth to develop empathy and be comfortable with moving forward in attempting to make change in uncomfortable situations (Ah Kwon, S., Nygreen, K., & Sanchez, P., 2006). The development of

empathy was critical in increasing the success of the program outcomes and in building leadership capacity among the youth themselves.

Table 6:

Statements of Growth

Evidence of Growth during Research Period		
Group	Pre-Intervention	Post Intervention
Creative Reaction Youth	Response to: If you wanted to get something changed in your community, how would you start? "I would start with myself, then talk to my friends about it and then we can talk to people higher than us" (Youth Interview, January 31, 2019).	Response to: Now that you have finished the program, if you wanted to get something changed in your community, how would you start? "Well, first we'd have to identify what exactly we want to change. So we'd have to know if there was a certain problem, we'd have to identify the problem, come up with possible solutions, and come towards a final conclusion on how to fix the problem. Then going back to peers, finding events or certain activities, and bring it to the attention of people within the community" (Youth Interview, March 20, 2019).

Observation Three: 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.

The case study group did not benefit from any partnerships. Research shows that

partnerships between local businesses, adults, and community representatives proved to be assets when promoting change with youth. Also highlighted was the importance of having many people to achieve one goal. Collective action is a powerful bargaining chip, which is difficulty to push back against. Partnerships can help leverage resources or pave tricky roads to achievement of common goals. The systemic approach to developing strategies to engage and partner with citizens (especially youth) is integral to change in democratic societies. (Abdullah et al., 2014; Allaman & Powers, 2012, Sirianni, 2006).

Christens, Powers, and Zeldin (2012) found that themes of collaboration between adults and youth are becoming a regular occurrence in the new millennium due to the many benefits of this partnership. The research found that regular interactions led to positive youth and civic development and then these interactions led to communities acting in democratic fashion to advocate for shared concerns for all participants. They noted four core elements involving adult-youth partnerships; authentic decision making, natural mentors, reciprocal activity, and community connectedness (Christens, Powers, & Zeldin, 2012). All of which were also demonstrated in the research conducted in this study.

Strong partnerships that could provide the youth with opportunities to reach their goals by providing assistance in meeting their physical needs, emotional needs, and structural needs were not present. Adult leaders who embraced connections that met the needs of the youth could have aided the youth in being more successful had time permitted. Having an absence of partnerships resulted in limited success in achieving goals.

Observation Four: 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.

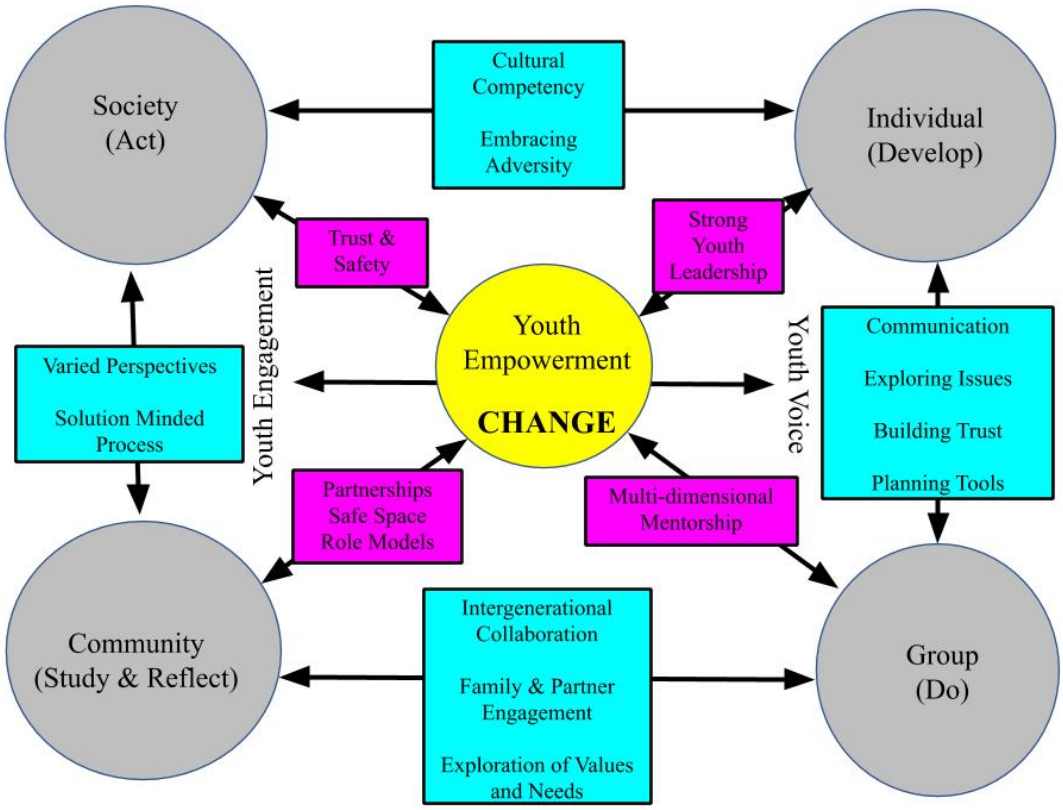
Youth mentors were a driving force for success of the programming. Having a strong mentor who was present and available for youth participants was key. The mentors had extensive experience working with youth, prioritized being a youth mentor, and it was their career. Strong mentors set up fundamental 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.

Research shows that it is the responsibility of the mentor to help youth explore social issues and empower them to make those great changes. Research suggests that mentoring relationships should enhance social and emotional development, promote positive identify and in turn improve cognitive functions. 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, S. A., Nygreen, K., & Sanchez, P., 2006). These mentors should enable youth to find purpose in changing the world around them. Mentors that 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 and stimulate partnerships, be champions for their interests, and build their commitments towards

common purposes (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Liang, Rappaport, Spencer, & West, 2013). Zimmerman (2007) echoed the importance of the presence 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. "Empowerment is beneficial at a societal level for democratic functioning, at an organizational level for both the capacity to make meaningful social change and to support leadership development among participants, and at a psychological level for increased involvement, critical awareness, and increased sense of agency in the civic arena" (Christens, Peterson, Reid, & Speer, 2019). Adults empowering youth not only affects the youth, but many other community stakeholders. The researcher believes that strong adult mentorship drastically effects youth empowerment outcomes.

Using this enlightened information, the researcher and team created a revised YPEM. It is included below in Figure 5.

Figure 5: *Youth Participatory Empowerment Model 2.0.*



Key for YPEM 2.0

Color	Description
	Youth Empowerment & Change in Community
	Conditions that must be met
	Process Elements & Tools (emerging from skills, strategies, and activities)
	Focus of Engagement

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This research began with a mission to find an explanation and solution to the observed phenomenon that fractured communities across the United States of America causing pain for citizens. It was found that the pain that many communities experience is a direct result of disconnected citizens. The researcher also found that a program to empower young citizens can have the most 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, Perkins, & Serido, 2011). Young people have the most at stake in the future and they have a fresh look at problems and solutions for the world that they will inherit.

Given the opportunity through building a resilient leadership skill set, these young people have the power to actively engage 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 were used 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 as a tool to guide groups through various stages of action. The model provides activities that support an empowerment sequence that builds 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, the researcher and original team 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. Those implications are summarized here.

Implication One: 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 are few models that assist mentors and youth leaders with planning a program that breaks the process into measurable steps. 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 YPEM model, the leadership skills are being developed in an authentic real-world, problem-based setting. YPEM relies on the ability of youth leaders to activate the group and requires adult mentors to take a back seat and serve 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, delivers a compelling process of empowerment.

Implication Two: The model provides guidance to aid in developing a culture of trust

In the research group, trust was an absolute imperative to engagement. Youth are not inclined to voice ideas, opinions, or input of any kind if they feel like they are going to be judged or put down for their input. It is natural to be inhibited when among people

with whom trust has not been established. 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 team building and trust building are naturally considered in a lot of group dynamics, YPEM recognizes that norms differ among 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 among a wide range of youth demographics because it is built upon a strong foundation, rooted in research, and tested with vastly different groups across the United States.

Implication Three: The model encourages a youth led group that has an actively engaged mentor who guides from the side

An adult mentor needs to recognize their important role in the process of building youth empowerment. Case studies revealed that when youth are left with 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 and thought that went into creating YPEM enables mentors to actively engage youth on their journey to empowerment and change.

Implication Four: The model encourages solid partnerships to support youth leadership in a way that allows them to activate 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 intentionally and unintentionally highlight the characteristics of youth voice, engagement, and empowerment that drive YPEM. The significance and need for strong partnerships are exemplified in the fact that the role of 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 with the SCM for leadership development is unique to this model. The results of the research project support the combination of the SCM attributes in YPEM. Demonstration of the seven attributes of the SCM will lead to change when combined with a program that builds empowerment. It can be implemented by youth and adult mentors who work with youth in various settings since cultural competence is nestled 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, 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 showcasing to others.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher and team developed YPEM as a guidebook for the seven focus groups to use during the research process. The researcher agrees that a PAR qualitative study was the best method because of the use of research tools of interviews, observations, and reflections. However, there were some limitations of the research design that impacted the outcomes; these limitations were analyzed and streamlined.

Limitation One: Lack of time to implement research

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

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

Limitation Two: Adult Barriers

Due to this research being designed around empowering youth, adults had to be involved; however, their level of involvement or willingness to participate had direct impacts on 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 they were too involved, they persuaded the youth to act on their own agenda and suppressed youth voice. In this role, adults acted as a decision maker and not a facilitator. When adults were under involved, logistical issues were present due to lack of consent, transportation, funding, and supporting youth endeavors that required adult facilitation.

Future Research: 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 of youth voice, engagement, and empowerment. This could improve trust and provide acknowledgment of parents and guardians in the process. This might be useful to have more of an insight into the community and culture perspectives of the youth involved in YPEM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section the recommendations that resulted from the research are presented. The researcher, 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. The researcher recommends 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 leadership skills from surfacing.

Curriculum and training support for educators is available through activities expounded upon in YPEM Guidebook. The activities, as well as the scope and sequence, are suggested and may be adapted based on community needs. At the forefront, educators must allow youth to develop a process to establish norms and procedures. It is recommended that groups 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 researcher recommends cultivating structured partnerships which involves youth to youth collaboration, parental input, and community and intergenerational partnerships that help with the unpacking and highlighting of youth voice and empowerment. First, a structured framework for youth to youth collaboration and partnership building is essential to ensuring that multiple perspectives among a group are listened to, valued, and used throughout each stage of YPEM process. Next, a framework for ways in which parents can serve as partners through 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 includes 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 with the skills in a structured framework 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. Partnerships entangle multiple people,

businesses, and representatives in common causes making them stronger and reflect multiple viewpoints across demographics strengthening the likelihood of change.

Recommendation Three: Communities

It is recommended that facilitators in youth-led endeavors are knowledgeable about the communities in which youth reside and that these communities 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 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 that 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 that 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 the belief systems within their cultures to the youth and 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, such as teachers, counselors, community members, and family members that are put into roles of mentorship that have no training or role models. This training would include developing a mentorship program by using YPEM as a model. This model would result in the development of a mentorship program for adults as community leaders within a Mentor Participatory Engagement Model (MPEM).

It is important to note that the research alluded to data that successful mentors showed up and gave their true self. People can go through training, but there are interpersonal skills that are needed for mentors. This training should include modeling to observe best practices in action. This brings more of an 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 in person face to face frequently and consistently, and modeling public speaking and conversational skills. Communication was a strategy that was mentioned throughout the seven case studies that was essential to empowering youth. This includes providing mentors with a consistent feedback loop which embraces transparent two-way communication. This also supports learning and reflects active listening. Youth understand if adults are just there to check off a list versus there to engage and empower.

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

Lastly is a recommendation for building mentorship within community leaders. While there are some leaders that recognize youth, they do not recognize them as leaders within their community. Partnerships within the community help to provide insight to the strategies that work for the community itself. The MPEM would provide an inclusive mentoring structure for adults in varying roles throughout the community so that they will have the tools to empower youth and thus promote youth into leadership roles. 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 because of their mentors.

REFLECTION

At the beginning of this program, the researcher for this study worked in fields and positions that were connected to youth communities. This included implementing programs that built connections with youth and their leadership journey. The researcher's reflections through this process in the journey is described below.

As an educator for the last 16 years, I have endeavored to have a classroom where the students lead the class. My job is to maximize on their strengths and skills and allow them to soar as they discover and develop their individual potentials. I went into this

research having recently switched from classroom teacher to counselor. Doing so, I developed even closer relationships with youth and witnessed just how much they really had to say but weren't always heard. As a counselor, I appreciated the youths' desire to want to speak up on mental health. I thoroughly enjoyed working with them to bring awareness to a necessary topic amongst their peers. Overall, the research solidified what I know my purpose and passion is and has inspired me to keep empowering youth to promote and encourage change. It also challenged me to become even more of a leader amongst leaders. After going through the necessary formalities of this research project, I realize that it means so much more to me. This is something I have been working toward for a long time. My dedication to youth is not restricted to this moment, but in this moment, through this project, they are represented, I am represented, every student I have taught, mentored, and counseled is represented, my daughter is represented, and I am empowered ever the more to awaken their voices and make sure they are always heard.

CONCLUSION

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

How does implementing a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model affect

a) Youth perceptions of their ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?
b) Adult involvement in facilitating youth to influence a community heritage or social justice issue?

Research sub-questions:

1. To what extent 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 Astin and Heri's Social Change Theory Model (1996) help to explain observed YPEM outcomes?

In this section, those questions are answered.

The initial model, which was presented at the end of chapter two, provided the structure to embark upon an action research project with seven groups. This dissertation highlighted and reflected on one of those seven groups. Built upon findings through literature review, a Guidebook was drafted 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 could vary from 8 to 25, although the youth in this group ranged from 15-17. The youth group, under the guidance of a mentor, followed the sequencing as identified, moving through the model as suggested. It was noted up front that the model and lessons are suggestions and that there would be some variance because some participant groups were established, and 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 researcher analyzed what the results revealed about the effect YPEM had on youth and adult perceptions of youth's ability to influence a community heritage or social justice issue. Findings revealed that

implementing the proposed YPEM suggested a relationship between the implementation and youth and adult mentors' ability to cultivate youth voices by providing space and time for youth to consciously consider a community heritage or social justice need in their community. To maximize the impact of the model, the researcher realized that there are four things that can determine the progress: first, strong youth leaders -- who are either elected, appointed, or emerge naturally through the process. Next, safe space and trust building are central to a group's ability to engage. Third, the research showed that where partnerships from the community are strong, the empowerment process is maximized. Finally, adult mentors who are present and, in the background, can aid in supporting youth voice and engagement. Through initial stages of the project, the youth participants who were engaged in this action research, 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 how they could have impact on their society. Though the original model is written to reflect sequence steps, YPEM is most effective when participant groups flow freely through stages. Building trust, encouraging exploration and growth, and engaging partners through the process from development to action 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 help groups to engage and act on community needs.

The first sub question called upon the researcher to identify whether or not YPEM supported youth groups and mentors in the process of cultivating youth voice,

engagement, and empowerment. The project that emerged through this research stand as evidence that YPEM was helpful in each of the three missions. Because of the research, I saw youth in a broken community, working toward betterment of their world. In St. Louis, youth created a podcast and short film to bring awareness to mental health in youth and provide resources and coping skills. This improvement and awareness to their local community stand in real time to display the power of youth engagement. YPEM served as a valuable guide to help young people to act upon the ideas they have.

YPEM led engaged youth to experience empowerment in their community. Prior to the implementation of YPEM strategies, the case study group had been engaged in minimum bottom up change making. This project afforded youth an opportunity to begin with identifying a need in a community, and end with the youth themselves planning, organizing, and implementing action to make the change happen. At the end of the project, the participant group was asked to reflect on their growth and some examples of how they grew was highlighted in the case study and in the table that is in the interpretation section above.

The second sub question is to identify how integrating SCM attributes into the model affected the process. The researcher found that the values central to Astin (1996) and HERI's (1996) SCM, helped to explain 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. Several 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. Each member of a group has 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 seven leadership attributes help explain how leaders can affect community change.

Through analysis of results and reflection of the process, the researcher (and original team) revised the model to reflect feedback and themes that were illuminated in the study. Additionally, the Guidebook was revised to reflect strategies that were successful in leading the group through the process of empowerment. The new model highlights the fluidity of the process and illustrates its hierarchical approach. While the model is displayed as a two-dimensional model, the researchers envision it being pulled up from the center 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

take time and 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 that present in a movement. Their actions include, according to Meyer, that 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 this year, and by their own admission, there is much more work ahead. Studying the youth movement through the lens of YPEM, does illuminate evidence of leadership development and action by building trust, exploring problems and solutions, and engaging partners to cause change. The youth leaders demonstrate attributes of the SCM, the organizers bring a commitment to the group and society to the forefront.

The future of American discourse rests with youth. The health of community and citizenship is an important fight, and YPEM supports efforts of youth and youth mentors 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 has dedicated much of her life to youth activism (Ruane, 2015). In an interview on Ted Radio (2019), Sales eloquently described the

tension that youth and adults must play 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 to use their voice. As a researcher in this study, I stood witness to the process of the model as a guide for this purpose, and in my community and others, stands youth who have experienced success through the model. To have continued positive impact on repairing community disengagement, the youth must be heard, and if I have anything to do with it, they will.

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APPENDIX A

Definitions of Core-Values of the Social Change Model

APPENDIX A. Definitions of Core-Values of the Social Change Model (HERI, 1996)

Consciousness of Self.	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.
Congruence.	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.
Commitment.	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.
Collaboration.	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.
Common Purpose.	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.
Controversy with Civility.	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 others' views, and the exercise of restraint in criticizing the views and actions of others. Sample Items: 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.

APPENDIX B

The 7 C's Defined

APPENDIX B. The 7 C's Defined (Astin & Astin, 2016)

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 ● Personal ● 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

The Social Change Model Challenge:

"The model encourages highly participatory, non-hierarchical leadership, yet you…will be perceived by most students as being in a position of power and status."

Therefore, we must:

- Model the model
- Remember that we are the catalysts from which this work will start
- Continue to work on the model

APPENDIX C

The Three Categories of the Seven C's (Adapted from Higher Education

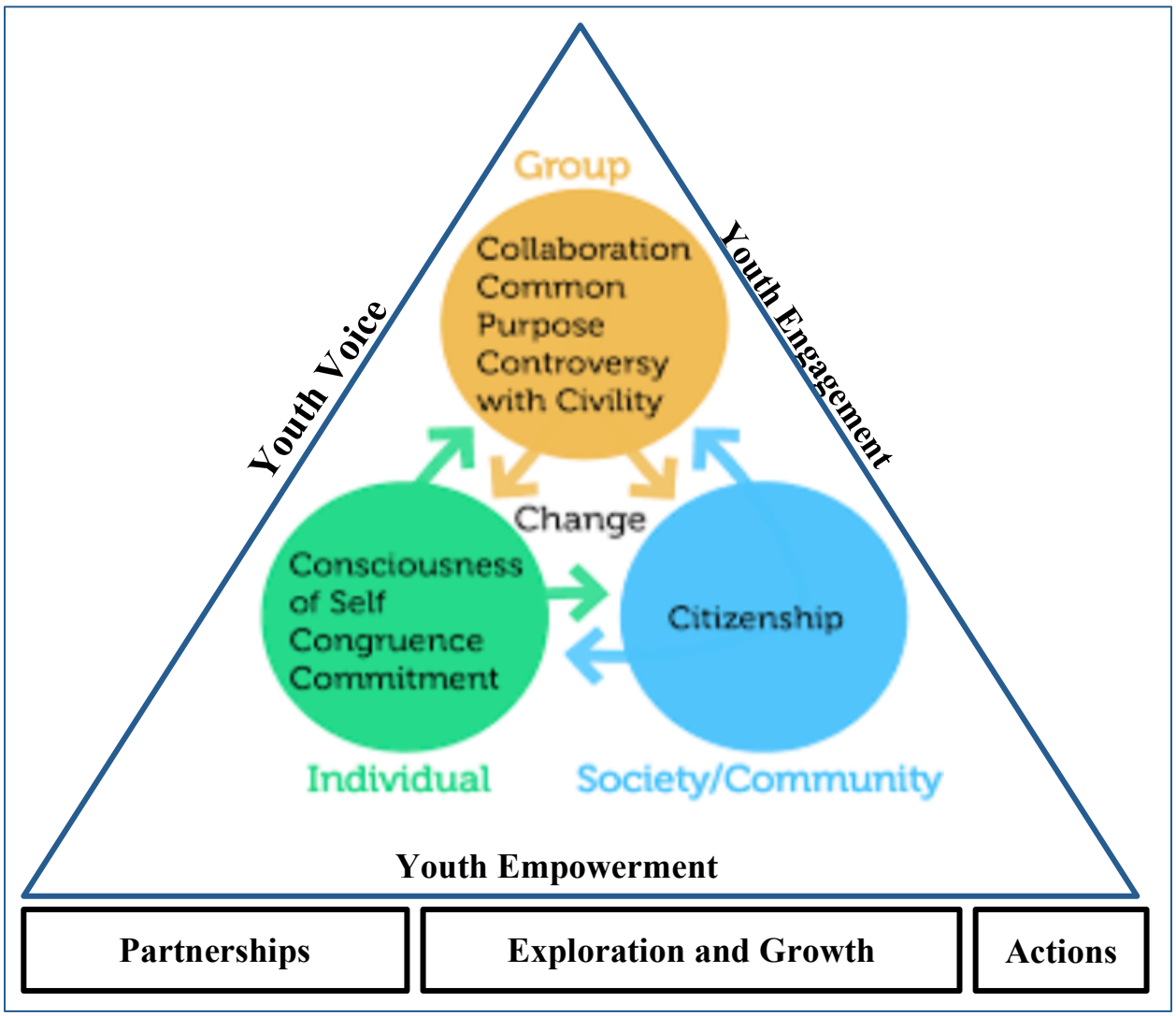
APPENDIX C. The Three Categories of the Seven C's (Adapted from Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, p. 19)

The Individual:	What individual qualities should our programs attempt to develop? What personal qualities support effective collective action and social change?
The Group:	What processes do students need to learn in order to work effectively in groups? How can collaboration foster individual development and social change?
The Community/Society	How can involvement in positive change in the community promote group collaboration and develop individual character?

APPENDIX D

Modified YPEM for youth reflection

APPENDIX D. Modified YPEM for youth reflection



APPENDIX E

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP PRE-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

APPENDIX E. YOUTH FOCUS GROUP 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?

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?

APPENDIX F

ADULT MENTOR PRE-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

APPENDIX F. ADULT MENTOR PRE-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

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?
    - What s 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 G

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP POST-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

APPENDIX G. YOUTH FOCUS GROUP 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. 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. 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?

APPENDIX H

ADULT MENTOR POST-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

APPENDIX H. ADULT MENTOR POST-INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

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 I

SIX OTHER RESEARCHER CASE STUDIES

APPENDIX I. SIX OTHER RESEARCHER CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY ONE: NAVAJO 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 a rural remote Native American Shonto community located in the Navajo Indian reservation in northern Arizona.

NAVAJO YOUTH: Participants and Process

This field study of a youth focus group, identified as NAVA Youth, consisted of five rural Native American students who resided on the Navajo Indian reservation, in the Shonto community, in northern Arizona. The youth students ranged in age from 16 to 24 years and the group originally started with four females, and one male student, who were volunteers at Navajo National Monument. The students 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 youth volunteer group included Asdzaa Nez at age 16, Adeed Begay at age 18, Ashii Natanii age 18, Nanibaa Nizhoní age 24, Ashkii Kee age 24, and their Mentor, Masa. The volunteer youth group worked together for 8 weeks from November to the end of 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 aruguably 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, therefore making 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 youth group during the initial interviews and the group received a copy of the guidebook for support of the stages identified for the Social Change Model of Leadership Development. 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 all the way to youth impacted change. All 13 questions addressed various

aspects of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development 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 distant, due to his insight on youth development, his own work level, and work responsibilities. The YPEM guidebook presented to the group and used throughout the project discusses 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 choose 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 youth group has lived in the Shonto area most of their lives, although two members had moved away for school in a metropolitan area hours away 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 ad hoc youth group brainstormed independently, with many ideas, from the very beginning and transitioned intermittently back and forth to the Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) 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 High School 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 formulated 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," Nizhoní 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 reasons 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 kind of just let them be because they're adult enough to work things out. I felt that, and that was really true because I mean that's what I like to do is that allow them to try and figure things out first and then if they just can't come to any kind of resolution then that's when I step in and try and work through things and you know what I first did was 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.

> I met my mentor and he gave me the opportunity to input my own ideas into certain projects and they let me take it on as like a leader. So, they put me already like a head, I would say. Like I wasn't comfortable at first but as soon as I got adjusted to it, I felt comfortable. (Asdzaa Nez, personal communication, March 17, 2019)

> 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)

> So, our mentor did kind of step back and we did take the lead on this but our mentor was very valuable to us as far as telling us what we can and can't do. And he also helped us with conflict resolution… (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, March 22, 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 aggressiveness 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.

> So, 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 and we really discussed it and I thought it was going really good. And further into it, we started to have creative differences and disagreements. At first 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)

> 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)

> 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.

An understanding of community required Navajo youth to think deeply about their place and the issues embedded in their day-to-day life.

An understanding of community required Navajo youth to grapple with a history of cultural loss.

An understanding of community helped Navajo youth understand traditional perspectives with the night sky and share that perspectives 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. As opposed to those who live in towns, it seemed that rural youth, whose nearest neighbors live two to three miles away from them and who do not see a Chapter house or a Township Office just down the street, had a more difficult time 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 representats 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 coalesced around a strong commitment towards their social justice issues of education, culture, and entertainment.

> Personal and community issues that are most important to me would be the preservation of the Navajo culture. 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 like I said, the language, 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 Nataani, personal communication, March 21, 2019)

> 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, the older Native American generation are hoping to share with and teach the youth about their culture and heritage. But as the personal communications with the youth group made clear, this next generation of Native American youth think about this just as much as the older generation. The Native American mentor admited that there needs to 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 – UNITY: 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, below, summarizes those strategies and offers examples from the research.

Table 3*:*

Effective Strategies for Group One

Strategy	Example
Consistent and Frequent Communication	"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." (NAVA Youth, personal communication, March 21, 2019)
Youth Voice	"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." (NAVA Youth, personal communication, March 19, 2019
Varied Perspectives	"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." (NAVA Youth, personal communication, March 19, 2019)
Peer to Peer	"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." (NAVA Youth, personal communication, March 19, 2019)

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 their own words what the visual meant. The astounding reflections from several students follow.

> This diagram means to me that every part is equal with one another. And that the circles in the middle represent each of the three categories and outside like youth voice, youth engagement, and youth empowerment. The circles go along with each of those and go along with change. (Aszaa Nez, personal communication, March 17, 2019)

> What this diagram means to me is how we would like to see change in our community, in our homes, or anywhere. Like anywhere as wide as the world. Thinking back to our project using this diagram, I feel like we did make an impression on the kids that did come to attend the project event. If we made an impression on them I'm sure they would hold those values close to them by just being aware of how we could best take care of the night sky. They would in turn want to take part in those kind of events, such as making a project up themselves, or educating others about how we could take care of the night sky, and it's just in full circle. (Ashii Nataani, personal communication, March 21, 2019)

> 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, like I always think about these different projects like how I have passion about illegal dumping and youth involvement. How I can't do something on my own like starting up a project. You should have 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, yeah it all really ties together and then what really supports that is the partnerships and learning new things. This says exploration and growth and of course acting on it. So with the partnerships we got support from NAU and hopefully in the future projects we get more community partnerships, and we also continued to learn through this process. We learned through conflict resolution with actions hopefully we are able to put these thoughts, our collective thoughts, myself, and my groups, and involving the community into action. (Nanibaa Nazhoní, personal communication, December 16, 2019)

Youth were shown the variation of the the YPEM (Appendix 7) 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.

CASE STUDY TWO: NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY

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. 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 the trauma within their community and how it impacted 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.

> [The UNITY youth felt that in tribes within California, Nevada, and overall west are less colonized compared to tribes that are within the eastern states of the United States.]
> Because I know over there on the east that are more colonized than we are over here. (Brian, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

> So like, 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)

> Know that we still exist, into this day. (McKenna, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

> Even when you think you're Mexican because you're brown and when you tell them, that you're native, they're like, 'oh your native you not what I expected', and they want to come up and try to touch you around some of them. 'I'd never thought I would see an actual native. You all don't look like what I see on TV.' (Brian, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

> People are like you still exist. Yes that's like a past tense versus present. (Dalia, 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 memebers 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

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, who they are as Native youth, and changing the false narrative, with youth leading the change, were very important to the youth. They are dealing with trauma passed down through generations and they need support from their community, positive mentors, and community members to support 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 commination, 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-, (Dalia, personal communication, February 16, 2019).

> 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 form 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 ofeducat themselves and others.

> I would say, I disagree with what you're saying and then give her facts and information, on what it really is. (McKenna, personal communication, February 16, 2019)
>
> I would educate the person. That's how I would come about it. (Faith, personal communication, February 16, 2019)
>
> Yeah, I would like to, I would clarify about what I'm saying to make sure that they understand it in a certain way to make it easier for them. (Kayla, personal communication, February 16, 2019)
>
> Instead of making an argument and saying that they're uneducated and saying that they're ... That they're (Thalia, personal communication, February 16, 2019)
>
> Like they're wrong. (Faith, personal communication, February 16, 2019)
>
> That they're wrong. You need to turn it into a situation where you, (Thalia, personal communication, February 16, 2019)
>
> Educating them in the moment. (Faith, personal communication, February 16, 2019)
>
> 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)

The importance of leading by example was also expressed by Deryn, who recognized that, “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. When asked about the location of their project, and how they were able to get the space approved, Faith noted:

> 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 also 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.

> 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)

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.

> 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. Because 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. Because 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 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 that is associated with education 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. The goal, according to Deryn, is

> 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 about getting, catching word of this assignment at school one time. It's about um, it was an AP assignment, and he 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. (Jonah, personal communication, February 7, 2019)

> He was, at the time I was in band. And 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. And 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)

> 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)

These students shared their experiences at the local high schools, but the conversation continued with another example from the local community college.

> When I first came like here (meaning the local Community College) I had a history class and the guy who was teaching the history about, it was 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.
>
> And 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 that (talking about cultural songs). But 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.

> But 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:

> 'Cause I think we all did a great job, especially the younger ones when they, they don't really, they didn't know we were doing this for a while. And because they're not here for it, 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.

> I was just going to say the same thing, 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 also have those people have the same feelings, you want them to connect with you, on wanting to 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 affect. 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 as a result 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. Because I've had... we went to this DC trip and this girl from Alaska, she 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 now a days 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, I guess. So I think this process will help a lot with people that don't have the resources and don't have steps in their head or planning for 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. Below is a table containing those key strategies

Table 4: *Effective Strategies for Group Two Participant Group*

Strategy	**Example**
Communication	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 "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)
Cultural Competency	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).
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 fire place, 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).

NEVADA NATIVE YOUTH – UNITY: YPEM and Overall Reflections

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 move forward,

> 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. Faith reflected on helping another tribal youth,

> I told her, "We all have each others 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 variation of YPEM (Appendix 7) 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. When he was asked if he was the same at the end of this process, he said,

> 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 attend the conference in Idaho and she also thought the trips along with this 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 impacted 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 empower youth and youth mentors with a Youth Participatory Empowerment Model (YPEM) 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 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 extremely 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, the researcher was assisted by Mary Gillis, co-researcher, to conduct participant interviews and strengthen study validity.

The group's mentor (the researcher?) 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 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 a total of 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. He mentioned that

> 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 of youth that he worked with, 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. He mentioned,

> 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. He stated,

> So when, let's say, the mayor is taking office. She or he makes all of these

> 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 impacted 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 and was rooted in research which resulted in the Orleans Parish School Board's shift in 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.

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. As a result of this study, there were four essential themes that 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 meaningfully 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 was an opening to more 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 she was called names by other students. 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. She mentioned:

> 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. Karen mentioned:

> 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. She said:

> 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 racism was learned by grown-ups, 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 "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. He mentioned:

> 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 whether or not this was the way in which they would like members of their own families to be treated. Roberto and Emilio empathized with Edgar, often mentioning that they agreed with him and his claims. 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 President of the United States, 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. For example, Amanda mentioned:

> 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, sharing that:

> 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 SOCIAL: 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. Karen added:

> 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. She added:

> Cause like okay. We are like Hispanics. That's one thing that we're in common. Right? So, like, we all we know for a fact that family and all… they've gone through so much with living in the U.S. because so much is going on with immigrants and like people saying things about other people because of their race, you know… 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 and when really we're here to make a better living and all. And support our family because our parents came here because you know they want to have kids that are… that have a better life.
>
> You know, instead of living a bad life or like living in fear because there are laws here that can protect everyone you know. And rights here. Then

> in different countries they might not have the same law that we do here. Like, we have here and like what they want is just better jobs. You know salary for the kids and all, you know, live a good life, you know, experience and educate themselves on what they can do for a living. And not only that, education in America, like once you're working in a job here you're actually like helping like improve a system here in America you know and they're people who think like, oh, I'm a Mexican. And they might say oh this Mexican is just doing this to support her people. Like yeah that's true. But I could also support other people even if they're not Mexican, like my friend here like she is Honduran. They think like oh I only support Mexicans because I'm Mexican and like other people like she supports Hondurans because she's Honduran and all. And when 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. He stated:

> 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 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. She mentioned:

> 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

Citizenship

Why do you think that everything you have done so far makes you a good citizen?	
Amanda	"I think all of this, well, it's probably making me a good citizen because its showing that I care about more than myself… I am showing, like, that I want to… like, make a difference in my community."

Karen	"To me… I don't know if this is right, but I think being a good citizen is showing that you are… you want to be involved in making changes in your community. So, like, for example, we did a lot of research and I basically learned stuff that I didn't know about, like about the caravans or whatever, but now I know and if I talk to someone I can show that I care about those things. So, like, that will show that I am being, or trying to be a good citizen."
Edgar	"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."
Roberto	"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."
Emilio	"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."

JOVENES DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL: 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

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.

> So we had a persuasive and a convincing way of getting people's attention. You know to come over here and talk about this. You know what's the problem? And stuff and why we need support you know. And other people they understand what's going on and once they understood they. They decided to help us out and give us ideas of what we should do next. You know to make us improve. This was how our guests were able to help us with time and ideas (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. In addition, she mentioned that:

> 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 being committed to a common cause made it easier for the youth to unpack disagreements and come to a consensus on thoughts, ideas, and steps for moving forward. From the very beginning, and throughout the three 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. Below, Table 6 summarizes those strategies:

Table 6:

Effective Strategies for Group Three Participant Group

Strategy	**Example**
Creating and Using Norms of Collaboration	1) 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 ask the adult to help; Work together because we need to remember that we all want to make this a better place for our people 2) Throughout the meetings, youth and mentor referred back to the Norms of Collaboration, either at the beginning of the meeting or as needed, in order to center the youth in their initial agreements for working with one another.
Active Listening	1) Youth were required to practice active listening skills as they shared their own personal narratives with one another throughout the process. This was one of the Norms of Collaboration that was instrumental in creating trust. 2) Youth demonstrated active listening, particularly when they were able to agree or relate 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 with regards to the current political climate.

Establishing Trust	1) 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. 2) 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	1) 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 the unsuccessful migration of her cousins from Honduras and how this made her feel bad. 2) Youth were vulnerable enough to share that their identities were negatively labeled 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 effectively work together. 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 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 time frame 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 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 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 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 was happy to help with the research and 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 has reached out on several occasions to support additional work outside of the research.

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 WiFi, 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. 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 WiFi services. There is a large mural on the wall that youth created after Michael Brown's death in Ferguson. 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 importance of place is recognized by the executive director as well as government partners that gifted the youth the space. 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 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. During his initial interview, Alex discussed the importance of active listening.

> [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, photographer, nail techs, and hair stylists for the event. Those community provider? volunteers also attended the planning meetings to meet the youth and 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 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 life-blood of a community and that, when leadership ignoes 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 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 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.

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). Other 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 escpecially looks for adults that listen for the intimate details that affect youth lives and are willing to help meet those needs (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 plan? 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 life styles, 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, below, summarizes those strategies.

Table 7

Effective Strategies for Group Four Participant Group

Strategy	Example
Active Listening	(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). 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 applies, what their last ACT score was, what their position was) supported the adults belief in active listening (personal communication, March 3, 2019).
Use of Planning Tools	"Just writing it down. Writing it down" (Ferguson Youth Advisory Board, personal communication, March 4, 2019). "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). "...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).
Consistent and Frequent Communication	"How it hindered it was probably because we were missing members or we were trying to discuss the details within our group chat outside of the meetings. We didn't get communication. That was probably the thing. 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). "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 (Appendix 7). The youth then told the researcher what the visual meant to them. The youth president said:

> 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. Alex stated:

> 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)

CASE STUDY FIVE: ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH GROUP

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 rural community located in Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri, a Midwestern state in the United States.

ELK PRAIRIE 4-H YOUTH: Participants and Setting

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." When asked what was missing, she replied,

> 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 warm up 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. Hope said,

> They don't really support [farming? 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. (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, tendency for parents to overrule youth suggestions, and 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" (researcher observation, 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. In fact, Susan said,

> 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).

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. Hope said about team bonding,

> 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 or advocating for community heritage that is important to them. From here, youth are on a trajectory of empowerment. Susan explained,

> 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. Susan addressed this again in the post-interview,

> 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 do this, 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).

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, who noted that

> We're very similar to many communities in that we have a lot of resources to provide, but unfortunately not everyone knows of them. Being able to make connections with resources and then once you connect them have the ability to provide the needed information for that connection 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. Susan elaborated,

> 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. Susan discussed this value,

> 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. To develop strong citizenry in youth, Susan said:

> 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, 20180)

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. Susan said,

> 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. She said,

> 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: Strategies

During the research period many strategies emerged as imperative for the growth and empowerment of this group. Table 9, below, summarizes those strategies.

Table 9:

Effective Strategies for Participant Group Six

Strategy	Example
Procedural Norms	1. 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)
Round Table Discussion	1. 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.
Trust Building	Youth and mentors plan monthly outings and movie nights in order to build the team trust and inner group mentoring: 1. “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” (Elk Prairie 4-H Club, Youth Focus Group, 2019). 2. “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” (Elk Prairie 4-H Club, Mentor, 2019).
Planning Tools	1. “Like when we make a picture and draw it out so that we can all have input” (Jackie, personal communication, March 14, 2019). 2. “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). 3. “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	1. 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).

	2. Example two
Family & Partner Engagement	1. 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). 2. 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) 3. 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). 4. “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. Hope said,

> I personally think we've touched everything because through the group, as a club that is what we do, we help out, Again we want to make sure that we had the help from the community. 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. In one meeting, for instance, the group was still exploring youth perspective as listed in exploration and growth for stage one, as they were already engaging partners as outlined in stage two. In fact, that attribute of stage one continued throughout the duration of the project (personal communication, December 13, 2018). 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. Laura observed that,

> 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 community and government partnerships, youth were able to see their community heritage preservation and education project through from initial development of an idea to shovel in the dirt. 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).

CASE STUDY SIX: BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL

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 suburban area north of St. Louis, Missouri.

BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: Participants and Process

Berkeley Middle School is 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 nine 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. https://www.fergflor.org/domain/72.2019.).

As stated, the student council is made up of ten 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 representatives. As the project progressed, more students attended and permission slips came in.

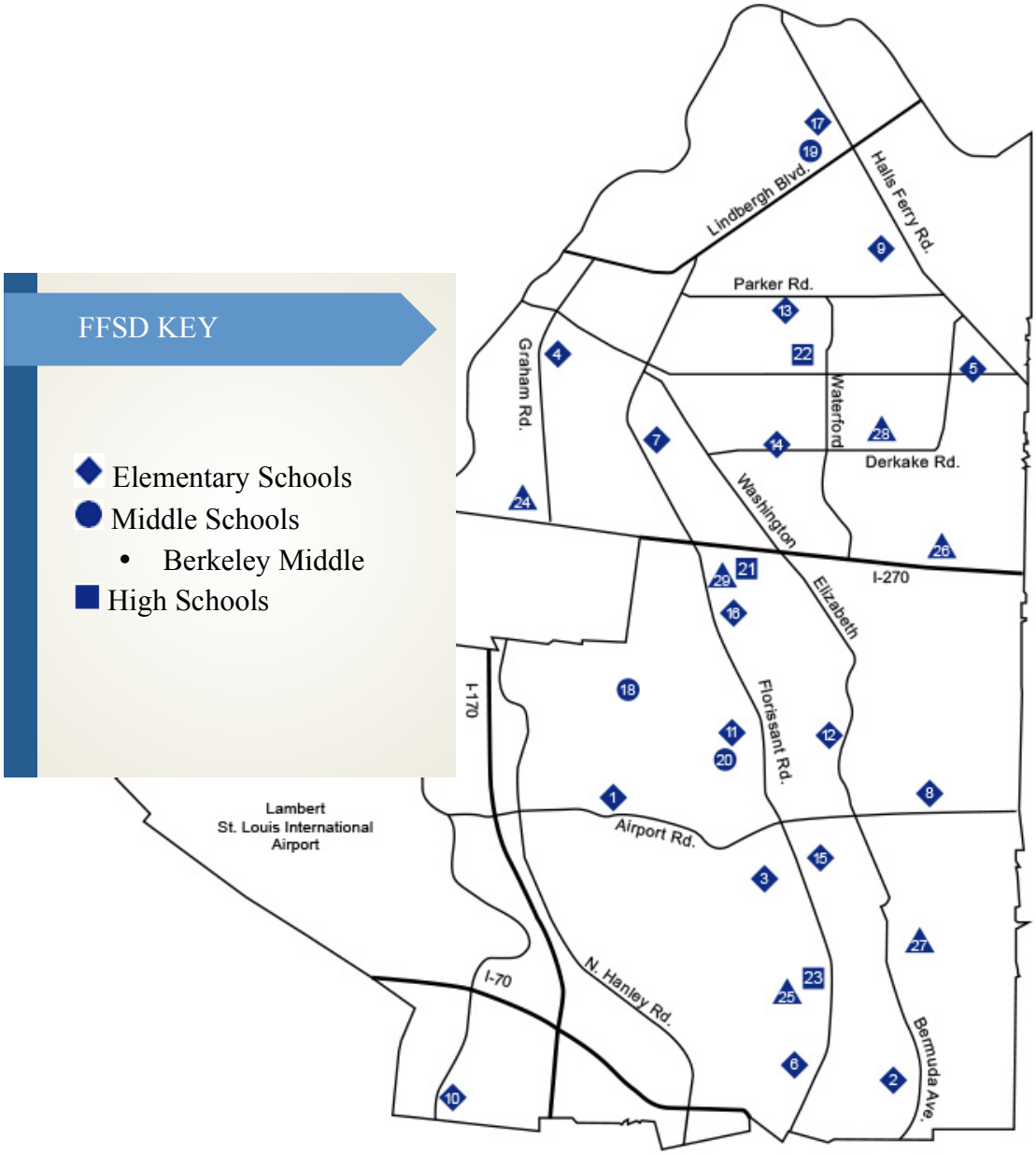


Figure 5. Consolidation of Ferguson Middle School and McCluer High School

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

Four 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 is core for a youth led initiative. The last theme was mentorship. This group lacked 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. In the initial interview with the mentor she stated,

> 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 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. In our YPEM model, citizenship is introduced during the study stage. Students actually spoke more of citizenship in their pre-interview than post- and, in both cases, they addressed citizenship in two different communities. This separation of communities made empowerment more difficult for the group. This separation of communities also played into the second theme that emerged.

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. 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 alot 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 chose of strategies and leadership styles was interesting to watch.

BERKELEY STUDENT COUNCIL: 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 10.

Table 10

Effective Strategies for Group Six Participant Group

Strategy	**Example**
Active Listening	Students brainstormed ideas, repeating back what other members said to clarify and refine their choice for an issue to address (personal communication, February 27, 2019) "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)
Smart Goal Planners	Group utilized smart goal planners in YPEM to document and organize thinking. (personal communication, (February 27,2019) Group utilized smart board to document and save ideas in order to recap at next meeting.(personal communication, February 20, 27, March 6, 2019 "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
Plus/Delta	Group created plus/delta chart and utilized this technique (personal communication, March 6, 2019) Group created plus/delta chart at the end of the first meeting (personal communication, February 20, 2019)
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 (personal personal communication, March 20, 2019) Alice and Jakari led February 27th meeting (personal communication, February 27, 2019) Kenzie led March 12th meeting (personal communication, March 12, 2019 "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

Although there were other strategies used these strategies were most effective in creating youth voice, engagement and empowerment for this group.

REFLECTION on YPEM and OVERALL REFLECTIONS

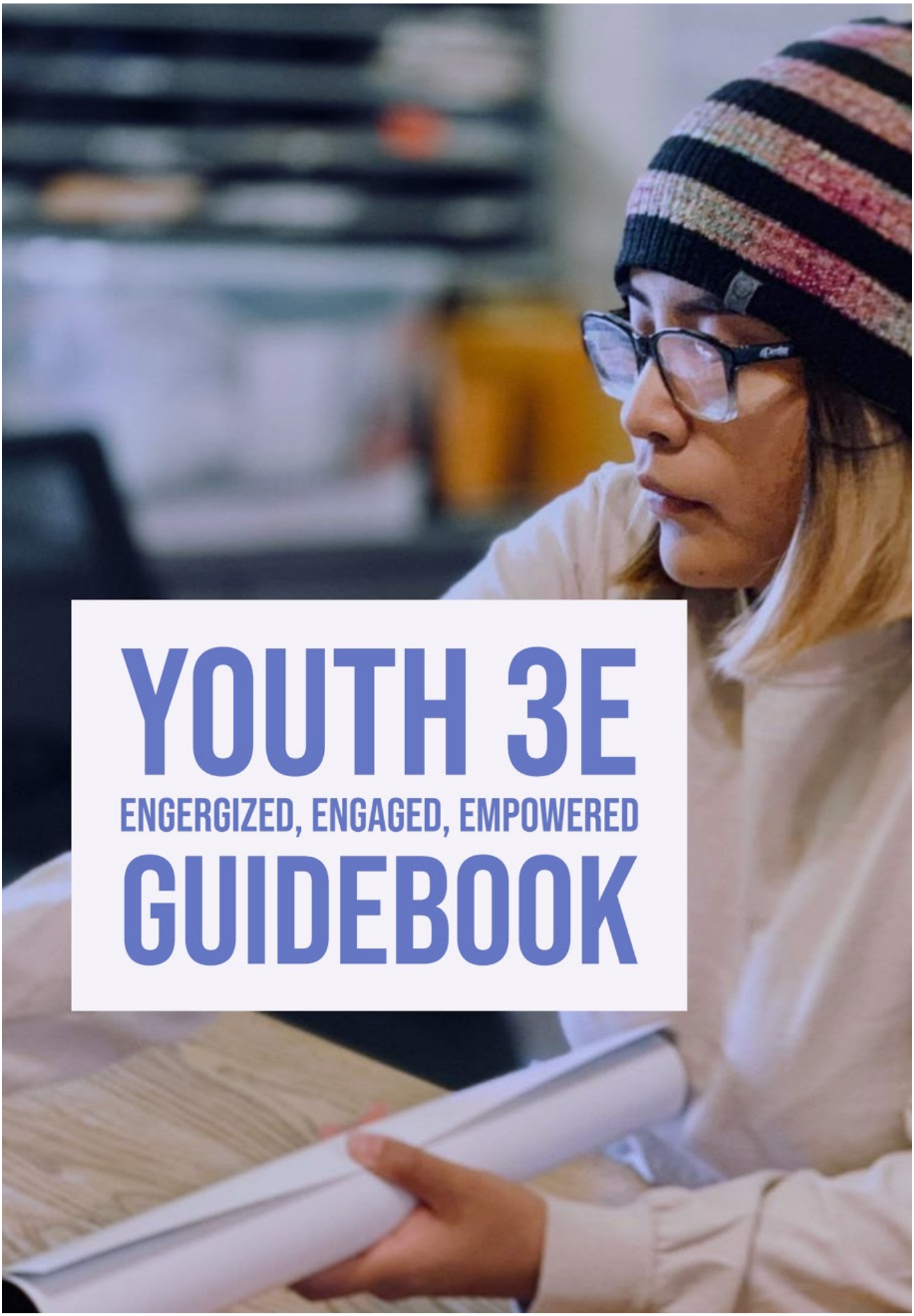
The overall format of YPEM was useful in helping to create youth voice, engagement and empowerment in this group. Although we did not use every strategy provided, we utilized most of them. As stated above, the group found the active listening, plus/deltas, organizers, partnerships, and student led meetings to be the most helpful. This group was already created, so that aspect of YPEM was not necessary. However, the group worked through the rest of the steps. We were at stage 4 when the research window ended but had already started to see changes in youth attitudes to civic engagement, change, and collaboration. There are eight attributes to the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, a component of the YPEM. All were seen in the role of topic selection by the group, bullying, but some more often than others. As stated in the themes section, safety and trust were very important to this group and. 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). This quote seemed to bring together that sense of engagement and empowerment with an emphasis on youth voice.

APPENDIX J

KIDS THESE DAYS: YPEM Guidebook (Draft – Do not cite)

APPENDIX J. KIDS THESE DAYS: YPEM Guidebook (Draft – Do not cite)


YOUTH 3E
ENGERGIZED, ENGAGED, EMPOWERED
GUIDEBOOK

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.

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Intergenerational
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2.4 Examine Disconnected Citizens
Explore Root Causes
Successful Strategies
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UNIT THREE: Forming Committees & Dividing Duties
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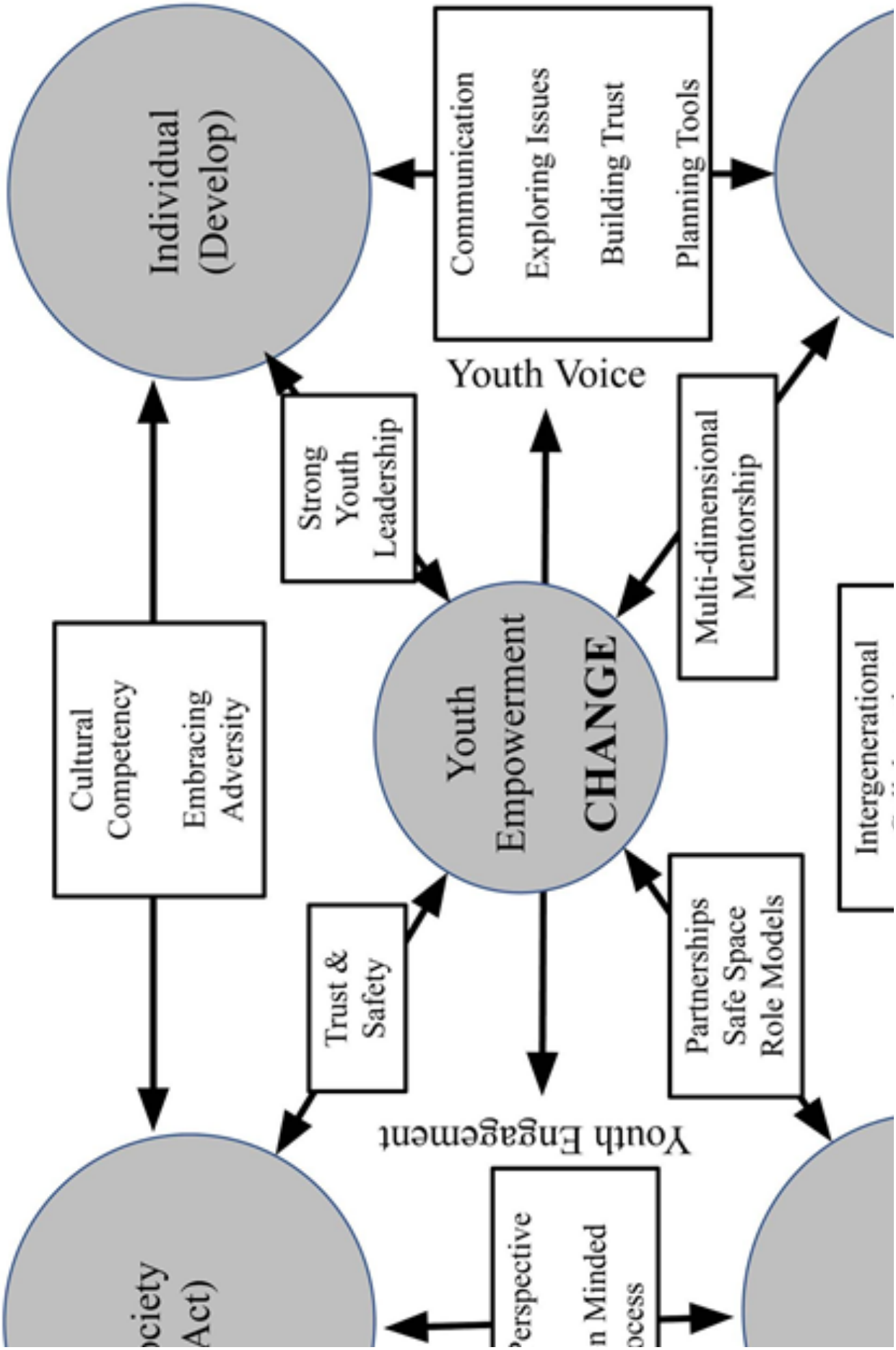
4.4 Marketing the Message
4.2 Implementing Project Steps

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

Youth Participatory Empowerment Model 2.0


Individual (Develop)
Communication
Exploring Issues
Building Trust
Planning Tools
Youth Voice
Strong Youth Leadership
Multi-dimensional Mentorship
Cultural Competency
Embracing Adversity
Youth Empowerment
CHANGE
Intergenerational
Trust & Safety
Partnerships
Safe Space
Role Models
Youth Engagement
ociety Act)
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Sources: (Anderson & Herr, 2010; HERI, 1996; Kemmis, 1982)

INTERPRETING THE MODEL

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:

Category of Strategy	**Author(s)**
Partnerships Community Partnerships	DuBois, D., & Keller, T. (2017). Investigation of the Integration of Supports for Youth Thriving Into a Community-Based Mentoring Program. Child Development, 88(5), 1480–1491.
	Ritchhart, R. (2015). Creating Cultures of Thinking: The Eight Forces we Must Master to Truly Transform our Schools. Josey-Bass.Ritchhart, 2015
	Tonge, J., Mycock, A., & Jeffery, B. (2012). Does Citizenship Engagement Make Young People Better-Engaged Citizens? Political Studies, 60, 578–602.
Intergenerational Mentoring	Youth Speak Out Coalition, & Zimmerman, K. (2007). Making space, making change: Models for youth-led social change organizations. *Children Youth and Environments*, *17*(2), 298-314.
Mentoring Programs	DuBois, D., & Keller, T. (2017). Investigation of the Integration of Supports for Youth Thriving Into a Community-Based Mentoring Program. Child Development, 88(5), 1480–1491. Rhodes, J. & DuBois, D.L. (2006) Understanding and facilitating youth mentoring. Social Policy Report: Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away. Retrieved from http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/20-3_youth_mentoring.pdf
Family Engagement	Constantino, S. (2016). Engage Every Family: Five Simple Principles. Corwin.
Exploration &	Admire-Duncan, T. (2015). Looking Inward: Reflecting on My

Growth: Cultural Competency	Cultural Competence as an Educator. English Journal: National Council of Teachers of English,105(1), 81-86.
Reflexive Practices	Zeldin, S., Christens, B. D., & Powers, J. L. (2013). The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnership: Bridging generations for youth development and community change. *American journal of community psychology*, *51*(3-4), 385-397.
Trust Building	Putnam, R. (2015). Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis. Simon & Schuster.
Building Safe Space	Nygreen, K., Kwon, S. A., & Sanchez, P. (2006). Youth Participation in Evaluation and Research. *Youth participation and community change*, 107.
Standards of Communicating: Recognizing Voice Honoring Viewpoints Managing Discussion Active Listening Civil Disagreement Giving & Receiving Feedback	Liang, B., Spencer, R., West, J., & Rappaport, N. (2013). Expanding the reach of youth mentoring: Partnering with youth for personal growth and social change. *Journal of Adolescence*, *36*(2), 257-267. Serido, J., Borden, L. M., & Perkins, D. F. (2011). Moving beyond youth voice. *Youth & society*, *43*(1), 44-63.
Vulnerability Failing Safely	Brown, B. (2015). *Rising strong: How the ability to reset transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead.* Spiegel & Grau. Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations*. Whole Hearts. Random House. Luscombe, B., (September 9, 2015). Teaching Kids to Fail Well. *TIME Magazine*. Retrieved from http://time.com/4025350/brene-brown-on-teaching-kids-to-fail-well/ Sundance Canyon Academy. (January 13, 2016). Teaching Vulnerability to troubled teen boys. Retrieved from https://www.sundancecanyonacademy.com/teaching-vulnerability-to-troubled-teen-boys/

Goal Setting & Solution Minded	Liang, B., Spencer, R., West, J., & Rappaport, N. (2013). Expanding the reach of youth mentoring: Partnering with youth for personal growth and social change. *Journal of Adolescence*, *36*(2), 257-267.
Actions: Problem-Based Learning	Boyte, H. (2013). Reinventing Citizenship as Public Work(pp. 1–36). University of Nebraska Omaha.
	Ritchhart, R. (2015). Creating Cultures of Thinking: The Eight Forces we Must Master to Truly Transform our Schools. Josey-Bass.Ritchhart, 2015
Citizenship Education	Boyte, H. (2013). Reinventing Citizenship as Public Work(pp. 1–36). University of Nebraska Omaha.
Reflection	
Showcasing Positive Actions	

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:

- 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?
- 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:

- 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:

- 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?

<u>Teen and Young Adult Questions</u>

Youth Voice:

- 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'd need to make that happen?
- What role do you see youth playing in making community decisions?

Youth Engagement:

- 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:

- 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?

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

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

Notes:

1.1 Recruiting Members

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED

Objective: Recruiting members • Find new members that support the groups mission **Activity: Snowball** • Have students write a name on a piece of paper. When asked to snowball throw the paper across the room to a peer. That peer adds a name. Repeat one more time. Divide up responsibilities of contacting potential members.	Materials: • Paper • Markers

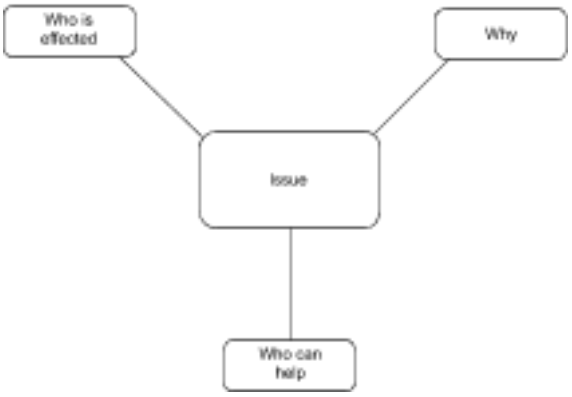
1.2 Establishing Norms

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED

Objective: Set norms
• How will we work together?
Activity:
• Have participants choose which words mean the most to them
  ○ Cooperate
  ○ Take turns
  ○ Listen
  ○ Make a plan
  ○ Be nice
  ○ Write it down
  ○ Take a vote
• Develop norms using the words in sentences (Examples)
  ○ We will listen to each other and take turns talking. We will make a plan and write it down.
  ○ If we don't agree we will be nice and take a vote
Objective: Set norms
• Don't raise hands
• Listen carefully
• Address one another respectfully
• Address comments to the group (no side conversations)
• Use sensitivity to take turns and not interrupt others
	Materials:
	• Index Cards with cooperative phrases written
	Strategy:
	• Socratic Seminar
	(Postman & Weingartner, 1969; Ritchhart, 2015)
	
	Discussions:
	• 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.

• 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	

1.3 Trust & Safety

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Build Trust • Develop trust between participants Activity 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.	Materials • Hula Hoop Venture Team Building Activities
Guiding questions ○ What was the issue that we picked to focus on? ○ Why is that important to you?	Materials: • Paper, Markers • Graphic Organizer 
)bjective: Build Trust :e 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. /hat are some traits that some leaders demonstrate that you think makes them a good leader? oday we are going to take a personality	Strategies: Discuss and analyze traits of a leader and the value of teams Eat ice cream and share results informally with friends Appendix XI: Neapolitan Quiz

quiz that was developed by the Philoptochos Leadership Institute. This personality quiz breaks leaders into three types: Chocolate, Vanilla, and Strawberry. Take note that 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") ake Quiz iscuss the results What kinds of tasks in this group would be good for people who are Chocolate? Vanilla? Strawberry?	Appendix VIII Philoptochos Leadership Institute It's a Neapolitan World Valuing Human Diversity 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.

1.4 Know Thyself (Consciousness of Self)

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Consciousness of Self **Activity:**Keep a journal to reflect on experiences and perspectives 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?	Materials: Journal, guiding questions, writing utensils Strategy: Journalling (Luna, 2019)
Objective: Consciousness of Self, Youth Voice **Activity:** Recognizing youth voice is important for youth	Materials: • What is Youth Voice? Activity

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. **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 role do youth play within the community? **Activity: What is Youth Voice? Activity**	Appendix ___ • Internet – ability to project video to youth with audio • Chart paper • Paper for student reflection • Markers • Pencils/pens for writing student reflection Strategies: Communication, youth voice, collaboration

1.5 Collective Mission (Congruence)

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Identify issues/perspectives • What issue is important to you? **Activity:** Have participants answer the following questions on matching posters and place appropriately o What things do you like about your community? (blue) o What things do you not like community? (yellow) Have participants look at plus and deltas to determine how they can enact change. o 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: • 4 poster boards or other designated areas marked: Plus (pink), Minus (yellow), Delta (green), Issues • post its-3 different colors corresponding to questions
)bjective: Identify vision & mission uiding Questions: • What's important to you in a group? • What makes you feel strong?	Materials: • Paper • Pens

• What makes you feel weak? • How do you work best? • What is the most important thing for this group to do?	Strategies: • 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

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Build Trust, Gain Commitment **Activity:** Creating a contract. Have youth members create a contract to that they all sign. Include elements from guiding questions. **Guiding Questions:** What is the purpose of this group? What is the expectation for meeting attendance? Who should be at meetings? What should be accomplished at meetings? What should be the outcome of meetings? **Activity:** Accountability Buddies 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.	Materials: • Large chart paper • Markers • Music • Speaker Strategies • Round Robin • Snake (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) • Stand Up, Hand Up, Pair Up (Kagan, 1994)

UNIT TWO: Identifying Community Issues & Needs

2.1 Communication

Active Listening
Voice & Viewpoints
Civil Disagreement
Vulnerability
Failing Safely

2.2 Mentoring
- Peer/Peer
- Adult Leaders
- Intergenerational

2.3 Identifying Community Pain
2.4 Examine Disconnected Citizens
- Explore Root Causes
- Successful Strategies

2.5 Diagram Community Changemakers
2.6 Chart Community Infrastructure and Policy Makers
2.7 Research Potential Partners
2.8 Choosing Project Focus

STAGE TWO (DO) PROJECT BUILDING

Partnerships	**Exploration & Growth**	**Actions**
2.2 Mentoring Peer/Peer Adult Leaders Intergenerational	2.1 Communication Active Listening Voice & Viewpoints Civil Disagreement Vulnerability Failing Safely	2.8 Choosing Project Focus
2.5 Diagram Community Changemakers	2.3 Identifying Community Pain	
2.6 Chart Community Infrastructure and Policy Makers	2.4 Examine Disconnected Citizens Explore Root Causes Successful Strategies	
2.7 Research Potential Partners		

Notes:

2.1 Communication

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED

Objective: Active Listening **Activity:** Spend some time listening to Julian Treasure's Ted Talk *5 Ways to Listen Better.* **Guiding Questions:** What did you take away from this? How do you listen now? What would you change about how you listen? How would that change your relationships? **Activity:** Complete the Active Listening Activity	**Materials:** WiFi access Julian Treasure's *5 Ways to Listen Better* (Treasure, 2011) Active Listening Activity (Dresdner, n.d.) (Appendix ___) **Strategies:** Active Listening
Objective: Voice, Viewpoints, and Civil Disagreement **Activity:** 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. **Guiding Questions:** How successful did you feel your group was? Were you better at communicating as the game went on? What did your group do well? What would you do differently now? Did you convey information as a whole or in parts? Which role do you think was most difficult? Which role do you think was the	**Materials:** Urban EdVenture Faculty, The Beast Activity. Retrieved from https://www.learningtogive.org/units/urban-edventure-course-westminster-schools/beast (Original work published by Urban EdVenture Course by the Westminster Schools) (Appendix ___) **Strategies:** Collaboration, Communication, Big-Picture Thinking, Problem Solving, Communications - Speaking and Listening,

most important? Why? What were your particular frustrations as a _____? What would you do differently? How has this game helped you think of ways you could be a better communicator in real life? Why is communication so important to humans? **Activity:** Complete the building of "The Beast" activity.	
Objective: Explore Viewpoints 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 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.	Materials: Paper
Objective: Vulnerability **Activity: Restorative Circle** Have youth sit in a circle with a talking piece and a visual to focus	**Materials:** Visual Talking stick **Strategies:**

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. 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	Restorative Circles (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015)
Objective: Failing Safely **Activity:** 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. **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?	**Materials:** • Failing Safely a Haiku Activity Appendix __ • Chart paper/markers • Post – its • Paper/pencils/pens Content covered on pages 51-52 of Dare to Lead Brown, B. (2018). Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts. Random House. **Strategies:** SMART Goals, Understanding vulnerability,

Activity: Failing Safely a Haiku	

2.2 Mentoring

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Identifying Mentors - Peer to Peer, Adult Leaders, and Intergenerational **Activity:** 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. **Guiding Questions:** 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. **Activity: Roles of a Mentor**	• Roles of a Mentor see Appendix _____ • 3 x 5 index cards • Chart paper and markers **Strategies:** **Mentoring, Communication**

2.3 Identifying Community Pain

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Identifying Community Pain **Activity: Needs/Wants Diagram** 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.	**Materials:** Needs/Wants Diagram (Appendix ___) Post its Pencils

2.4 Examine Disconnected Citizens

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
)bjective: Identify barriers • What problems will we have accomplishing our goal? Guiding questions o What would make this hard to fix? o What would you fix first? o How would you try to fix it? o What would be the hardest part? o Who from your list could help you? o Who else could help? o Who might not help? Activity: • Brainstorm on index card any possible problems to accomplishing goal for each green change • Sort into groups o We can solve this o We need help and we know how to get the help o We need help and we don't know who to get to help.	Iaterials: • Index cards
)bjective: Identify barriers ocratic 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 Diagram Community Changemakers

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
OBJECTIVE: DIAGRAM COMMUNITY CHANGEMAKERS	

2.6 Chart Community Infrastructure and Policy Makers

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Identify mentors and partners 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 • Introduce the support networks in the community and what they do • 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 • Full Group share out "What makes local partners important in being a changemaker?" • 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.	Materials: Several Copies of Graphic Organizers Strategy: Think, Pair, Share (Ritchhart, R., 2015) Community Partners Appendix VI **Civic support - city and county offices** (For instance: Mayor, City Council, Police, Firefighters,Senate/House representatives, City Departments: Parks/Rec, Animal Control, etc.) **Service organizations** Kiwana's, Lion's/Lioness, Optimist, Rotary **Local Businesses** Chamber of Commerce **Education** Public school systems in the area, private schools, home school communities, technical educations, post-secondary education in the area **Natural Resources** DNR, Forestry Department, USGS, Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife services **Public Libraries & Archives** **Local Media Outlets** **Area Religious Communities** Think, Pair, Share

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	**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. **Think** On your own, write ideas you have about how your youth group could benefit from partnering 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._____ **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._____

2.7 Research Potential Partners

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Engaging and Coordinate with Partners 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.	Materials: Tables/chairs Paper Strategy Potluck (Palmer, 2011)
Objective: Support mentors and partners Send thank you cards for coming to the potluck with pictures of the group in the card Give them an update on the project	Materials: Thank you notes Stamps

<table>
<tr><td>Invite them to attend sessions</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Objective: Sustain mentor and partner relationships
Guiding Questions:
• Who are we working with?
• How can we contact them?
• What can they do for us?</td><td>Materials:
Check in ”Google Keep”
• Digital post its with who (name of partner/contact info) and what (what they are doing)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Objective: Sustain mentor and partner relationships
Activities
• Send “Thank you” notes
• Make phone calls to check in with partners

Guiding Questions:
• Who are we working with?
• How can we contact them?
• What can they do for us?
• What can we do for them</td><td>Materials:
• Chart Paper
• Markers
• Thank you notes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Objective: Sustain mentor and partner relationships</td><td>Materials:
W-Partners Organizer, markers, existing partnerships
Strategies:
W-Partners: Who/What/Where/When

</td></tr>
</table>

2.8 Choosing Project Focus

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED

Objective: Identify Issue
• Identify each issue area
  ○ Develop SMART Goal for issues identified
Activity:
• Once issue is chosen the participant(s) must develop a SMART Goal for the change. Fill in any S and M at this time
Guiding questions
  ○ Which of these ideas is most important to you?
  ○ What would you do to change this?
  ○ How could you do that?
	Materials:
	• Yellow, green, purple post its

Objective: Identify issues/perspectives Chalk Talk Prompts - written largely for youth to see: 1 Consider your community. What place, identity, or history is important? 2, Is there any place, identity, or history that your community should work harder to preserve? 3. Is there an issue or issues affecting your peers in the community that you feel is important to improve? Youth will be asked to respond to the prompts by thinking about • What ideas come to mind when you consider this idea, question, or	Materials: Large paper Markers Strategy: Chalk Talk (Ritchhart, R., 2015) Appendix XIV

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?	
o 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. nter 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	laterials: 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	Strategies: Generating Questions (Ritchhart, 2015)

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'd like to see improved?

→What are some initial thoughts on

To ponder until will meet again: Which of the community partners would be good to enlist to help with the project?

Appendix IX

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.

	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How
is						
won't						
did						
might						
should						
will						

Objective: Research Issue

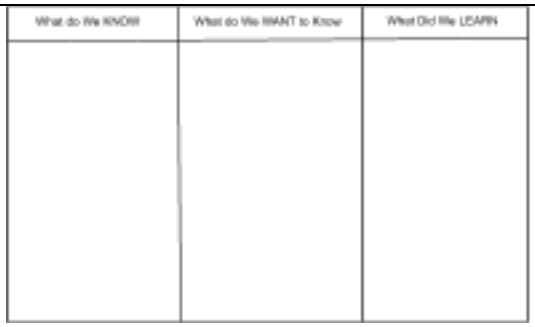
Guiding questions

- What do we know about our issue?
- What do we want to know about our issue?
- How can we find that

Materials:

- Paper, Markers
- Graphic Organizer

out?
- Who can help us with that?



Objective: Research Issue

n small groups, youths will talley the results of the surveys that they administered to the community members and draw conclusions based on the results.

hare 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.

laterials:

Chromebook Cart

Internet Access

Survey Results

Strategy:

Analyzing information

Appendix IX

Directions: Tally the results of the survey for each question below, 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've organized your thoughts, we will come together in the bigger group to see what kind of questions have emerged that may require more research.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Summarize key comments
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

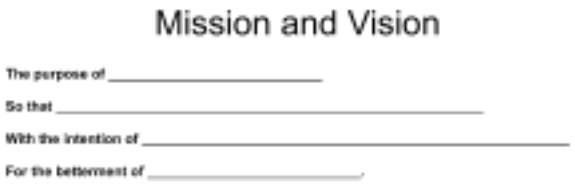
)bjective: Identify vision & mission

uiding questions

- What's important to you in a group?
- What makes you feel

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens
- First, then, who, next diagram
- Before, how, when diagram

strong? • What makes you feel weak? • How do you work best? • What is the most important thing for this group to do?	Strategies: • 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.
)bjective: Identify vision & mission	Materials: Paper with writing prompts in paragraph form  Mission and Vision The purpose of _____ So that _____ With the intention of _____ For the betterment of _____. Strategies: Snowball Each participant starts with one piece of paper and fills out the first section 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
)bjective: Identify Learning Insights	Materials: Look how far we've come doc Strategies: cooperative work to create a visual representation of all of the insights the groups

UNIT THREE: Forming Committees & Dividing Duties

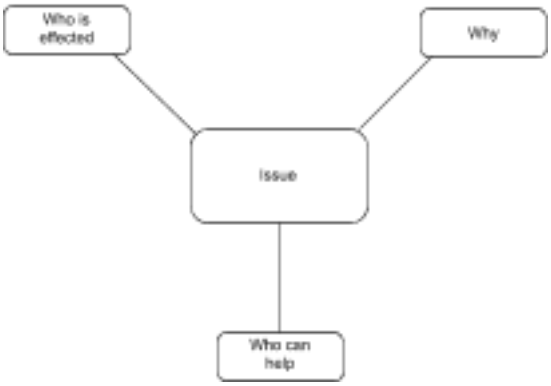
3.1 Cultural Competence in Community Activism
3.2 Using Reflexive Practice
3.3 Rights & Roles of Citizenship
3.4 Design a Changemaking Plan
Bottom Up Process
Goal Setting (Solution Minded)

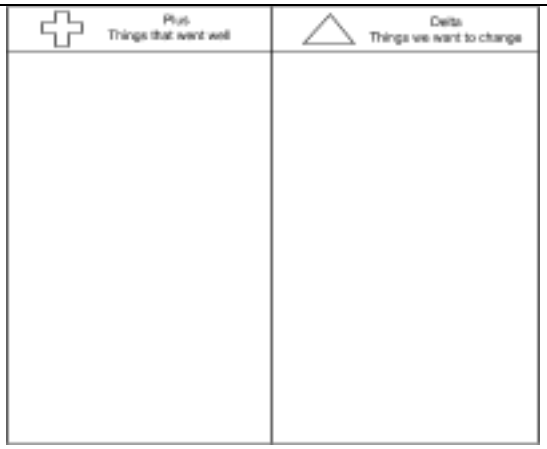
Partnerships	Exploration & Growth	Actions

	3.1 Cultural Competence in Community Activism	3.4 Design a Changemaking Plan Bottom Up Process Goal Setting (Solution Minded)
	3.2 Using Reflexive Practice	
	3.3 Rights & Roles of Citizenship	

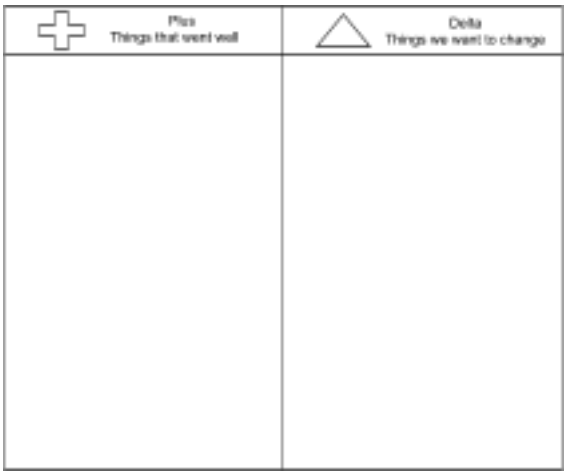
Notes:

3.1 Cultural Competence in Community Activism

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Identify culturally competent practices and viewpoints Guiding questions ○ Who would like this idea? Why? ○ Who wouldn't like this idea? Why? ○ Who might get mad or have their feelings hurt? Why?	Materials: • Paper, Markers, Graphic Organizer (Appendix II) 
Objective: Identify culturally competent practices Guiding Questions ○ What do you like about this group? ○ What do you not like about this group? ○ What do you want to try? ○ Who do you like to work with?	Strategies: Plus/Delta Chart (Appendix IV) Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001

○ What are you proud of? ○ What would you change?	

3.2 Using Reflexive Practice

Objective: Introduce Reflexive Strategy • Plus/Delta Chart (Appendix III) • Guiding Questions ○ What do you like about this group? ○ What do you not like about this group? ○ What do you want to try? ○ Who do you like to work with? ○ What are you proud of? ○ What would you change?	• 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've 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

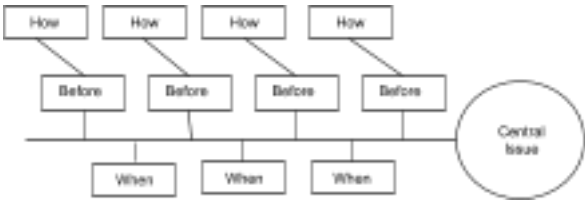
Objective: Citizenship **Activity:** In the YPEM process the definition of citizenship is built upon the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, "The model explicitly promotes the values of equity, social justice, self-knowledge, personal empowerment, collaboration, citizenship, and service" (HERI, 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. **Guiding Questions:** • How would you describe the	**Materials:** • Chart paper • Paper for student reflection • Markers • Pencils/pens for writing student reflection "A Word About Citizenship Activity" Appendix___ adapted from: Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). (1996). A social change model of leadership development (Version III). Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles. Earth Force, "Community Action Problem Solving Teacher Guide" (2008)**.** **Strategies:** **Citizenship, Community**

community in which you live? • What does "environment" mean to you? • What issues have you observed in your community? (political, environmental social) • What are the characteristics of a 'good' citizen? Or "community problem solver? **Activity:** A Word About "Citizenship" Activity	
)bjective: Explore Citizenship **Guiding Questions:** • What makes you a good (brother/sister/roommate/daughter …)? • What about living in your house, are you a good person to live with? Why? • What about in your neighborhood. What makes a good neighbor? What makes a bad neighbor? • What kind of neighbors do you want? • What about in your city? What is your job as a person living in your city? What makes a good citizen? What makes a not so good citizen? • What kind of citizen do you want to be? What do you think your responsibility is?	laterials: • Nesting Circles Diagram
)bjective: Explore youth citizenship 'ouTube Day! oday, we will watch stories of youth groups that have made change in their communities. 'ideo links here: 1. Insert link - Pipeline 2. Insert link - ICE sit in 3. Insert link - Historic youth	**Materials**: Computer Internet Projector Screen Popcorn **Strategies:**

4. Insert link - Marjory Stoneman Douglas We will stop and discuss certain strategies they use, what they did well, what we could learn from their experience	Think Sheet Generating Questions (Ritchhart, 2015).

3.4 Design a Changemaking Plan

Bottom Up Process
Goal Setting (Solution Minded)

Objective: Identify Planning Strategies • Build a Before/How diagram to determine which strategies are necessary for addressing the issue. Guiding questions o Before we can _____ what do we need to do? o How can we do that? o When does that need to be done? o Who can help? o Where do we start? o What plan can we make to begin?	Materials: • Before/How/When diagram 
Objective: Identify strategies to implement project Time to share out the things we talked about to the partners at last session. **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: • Our objective • Our resources/survey results	Strategies: Think Sheet Generating Questions (Ritchhart, 2015).

<table>
<tr>
<td>

- 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.

</td>
<td>

Appendix X

THINK SHEET: In each square, record discussion points regarding the topic. (This will be done together on large paper)

<table>
<tr><td>Our objective</td><td>Our resources</td></tr>
<tr><td>Our information from surveys/research</td><td>Our partners</td></tr>
</table>

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?

</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>

Objective: Implement initial project steps

Now we put it all together:

1. Timeline
2. List things to be done before the presentation and assign those responsibilities to someone with dates that each step should be completed
3. Make contact with the group that we will present to and schedule the presentation of our ideas
4. 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
5. Begin construction of presentation

</td>
<td>

Materials:

Computer, internet, projector

Strategies:

</td>
</tr>
</table>

UNIT FOUR: SOLICITING SUPPORT

4.1 Collaborating
4.2 Revising Vision & Plans
4.3 Soliciting Community Support

4.4 Marketing the Message
4.5 Implementing Project Steps

Partnerships	Exploration & Growth	Actions
4.1 Collaborating	4.2 Revising Vision & Plans	4.4 Marketing the Message
4.3 Soliciting Community Support		4.5 Implementing Project Steps

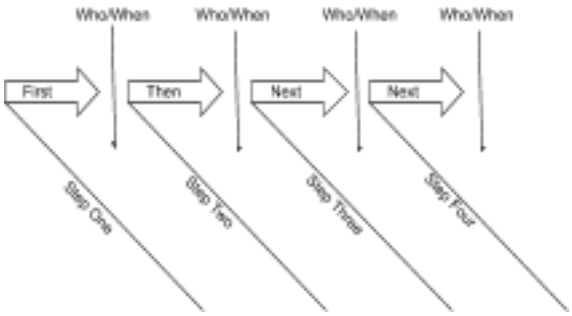
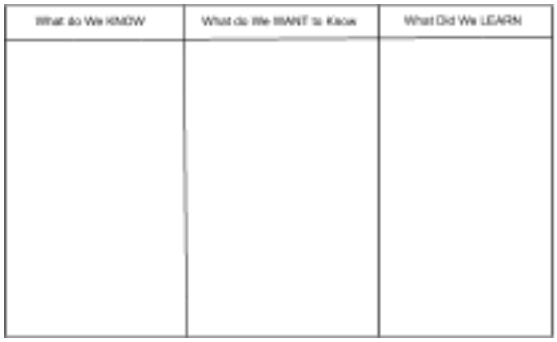
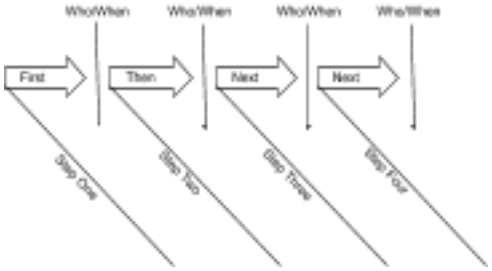
Notes:

4.1 Collaborating

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective:	

4.2 Revising Vision & Plans

Objective: Reflect on Findings • Revisit KWL chart (Appendix II) • Specifically address the what did you learn portion Guiding questions o Separate findings into things we can do, things we need help to do, things we can't do.	Materials: • Internet access • Devices to access internet Appendix III
)bjective: Analyze Findings/Revise Action Plan uiding questions o First we need to ….	laterials: • First, then, who, next diagram (Appendix VII) • Before, how, when diagram

○ Then…. ○ Who helps…. ○ Next we…. ○ After that…. Begin Action Plan	
Objective: Revisit norms • Revisit norms ○ Make changes as necessary	
Objective: Reflect on Findings • Revisit KWL chart (Appendix II) • Specifically address the what did you learn portion Guiding questions ○ Separate findings into things we can do, things we need help to do, things we can't do.	Materials: • Internet access • Devices to access internet 
)bjective: Analyze Findings/Revise Action Plan uiding questions ○ First we need to …. ○ Then…. ○ Who helps…. ○ Next we…. ○ After that….	Strategies: • First, then, who, next diagram (Appendix VII) 
Objective: Revisit norms • Revisit norms • Develop norms using the words in sentences ○ We will listen to each other and take turns	

talking. We will make a plan and write it down. o If we don't agree we will be nice and take a vote	
)bjective: Identify Learning Insights .ctivities • Committee work on action items and agenda uiding questions • What problems are we encountering • What solutions can we use to address them	

4.3 Soliciting Community Support

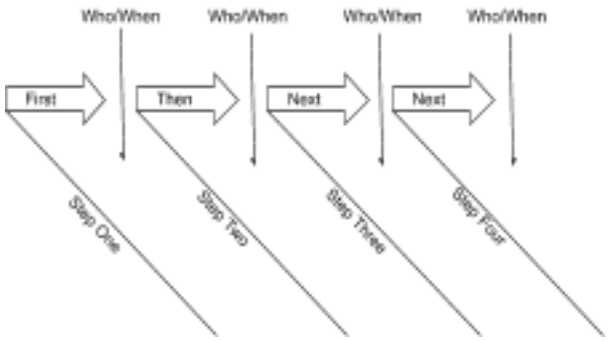
PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective:	

4.4 Marketing the Message

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Develop a Theme/Catchphrase/or logo	

4.5 Implementing Project Steps

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Implement Action Plan o First we need to …. o Then…. o Who helps…. o Next we….	Materials: • First, then, who, next diagram (Appendix VII) • Before, how, when diagram

○ After that….	Strategies: 
Objective: Implement Action Plan Activities • Responsibility Chart • Check off to do list • Verify appointments/Committee reports Guiding Questions: • Who are we working with? • How can we contact them? • What needs do we have • What can they do for us?	
Objective: Begin Project Activities • Set date • Work on presentation • Rehearse presentation • Work with partners to make sure presentation represents the shared vision Guiding questions • Does our presentation stay true to our mission as a group? • What can we do to reflect our group's	

mission and represent our group as leaders in this project?	
Objective: Implement Action Plan	Materials: Previously made Then What diagram and W-Person Diagram Strategies: Generate a formal action plan using both diagrams. Set dates for plan and accountability partnerships among participants. Create document in google and share with all participants.

UNIT FIVE: Change-Making

5.1 Presenting & Acting
5.2 Reflection
Showcasing Positive Actions
Celebrating

Partnerships	Exploration & Growth	Actions
		5.1 Presenting & Acting
		5.2 Reflection Showcasing Positive Actions Celebrating

Notes:

5.1 Presenting & Acting

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Present Project	Materials: Computers, action plan Strategies: Use www.prezi.com 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.

5.2 Reflection

Showcasing Positive Actions
Celebrating

PLAN	RESEARCHER NOTES AND MATERIALS NEEDED
Objective: Acknowledge Accomplishments Have the youth write I can statements showing their growth from the process. Examples are: "I can make change in my community, I can call government officials and ask for help, I can identify partnerships that benefit my cause."	Materials: Fun post its, markers

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

- 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. 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?

Teen and Adult Questions

- 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?

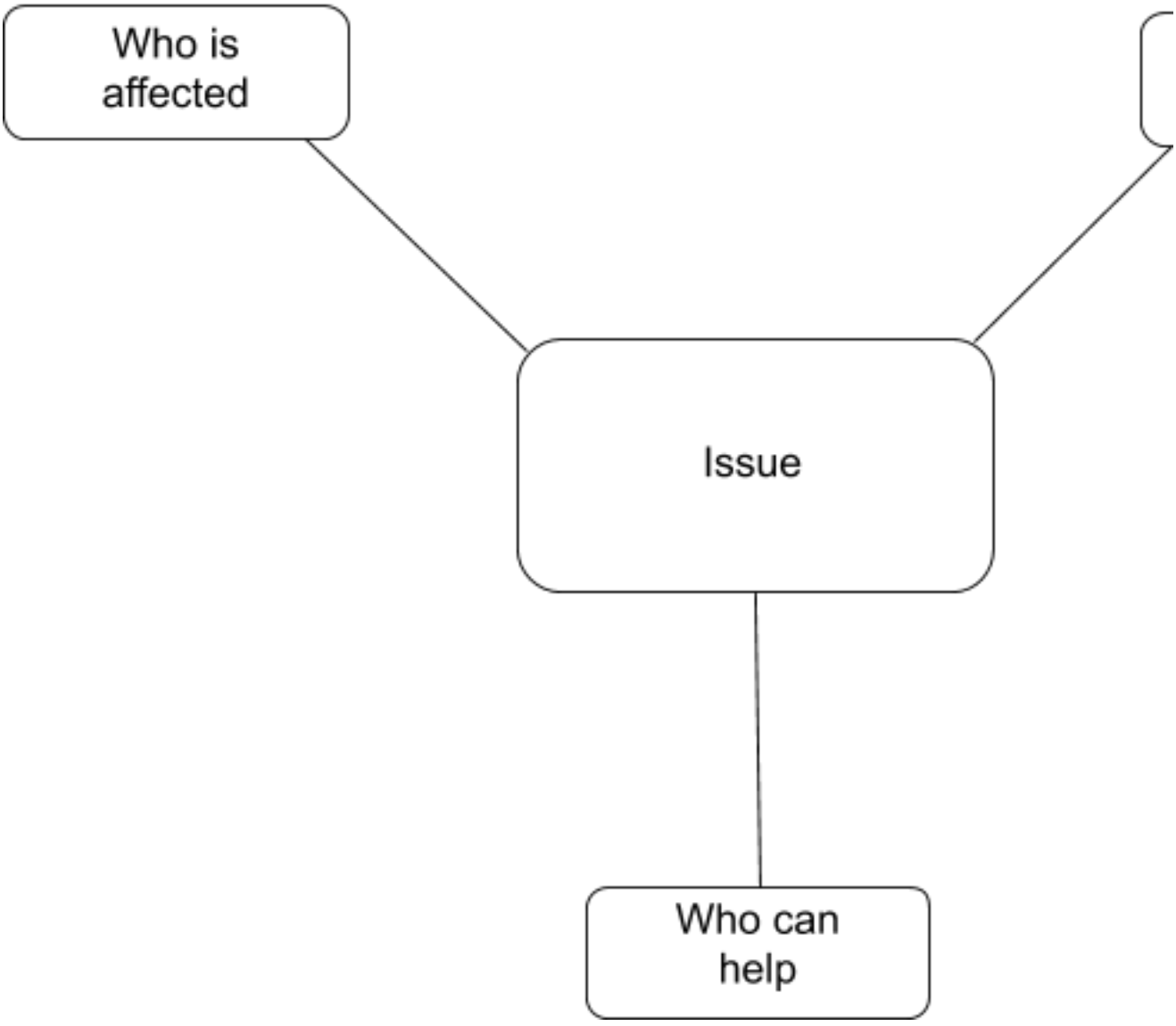
- When did you feel like your voice was heard during this project?
    - Can you give an example?

- What steps did the group take to accomplish the goal of the project?
    - What did you do about disagreements?

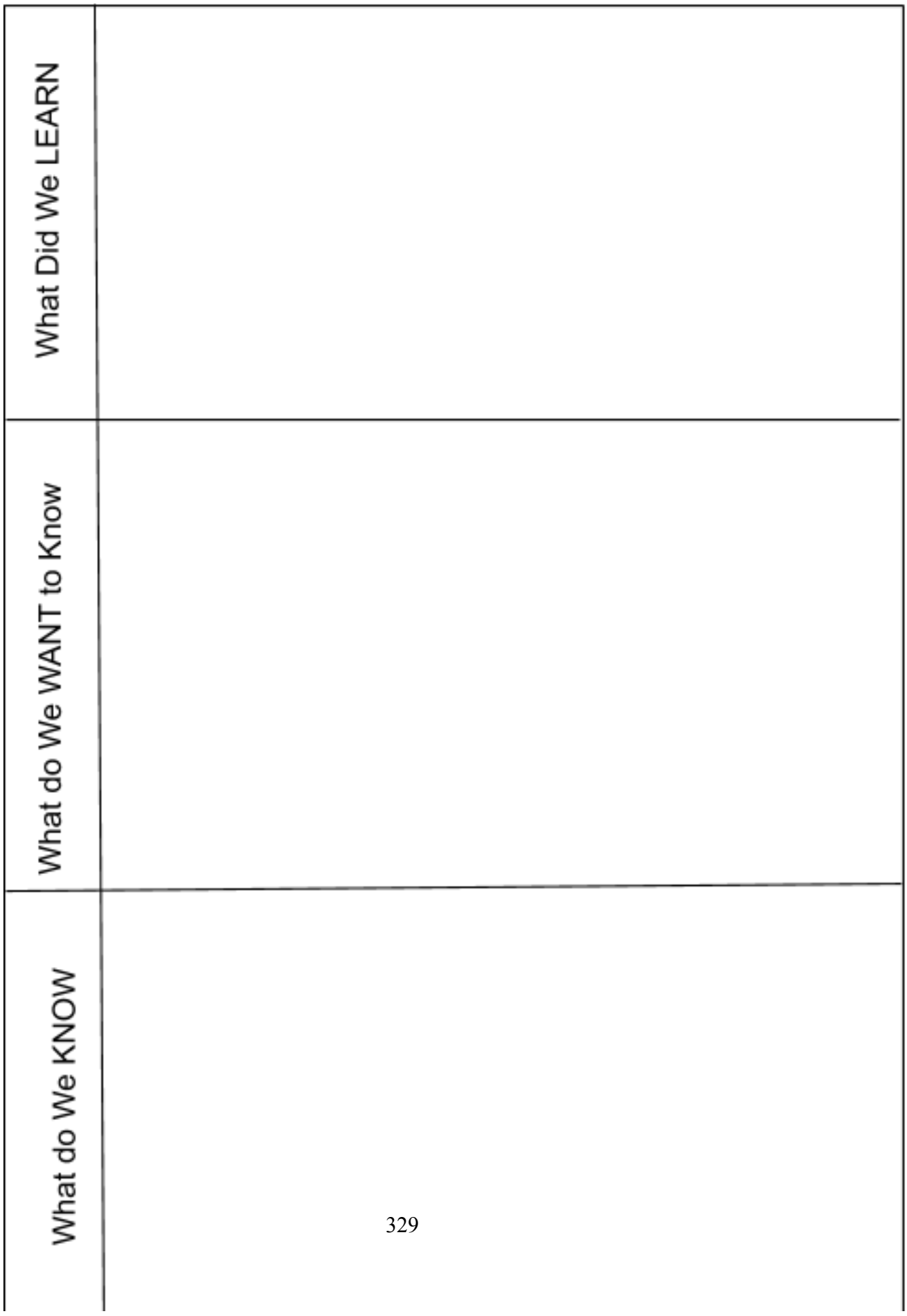
- Let's study this diagram a little. Notice that each circle represents "individual change," "group change," or "societal change." Now, think about this project. What does this diagram mean to you?

- 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?

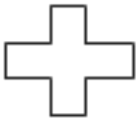
Appendix II



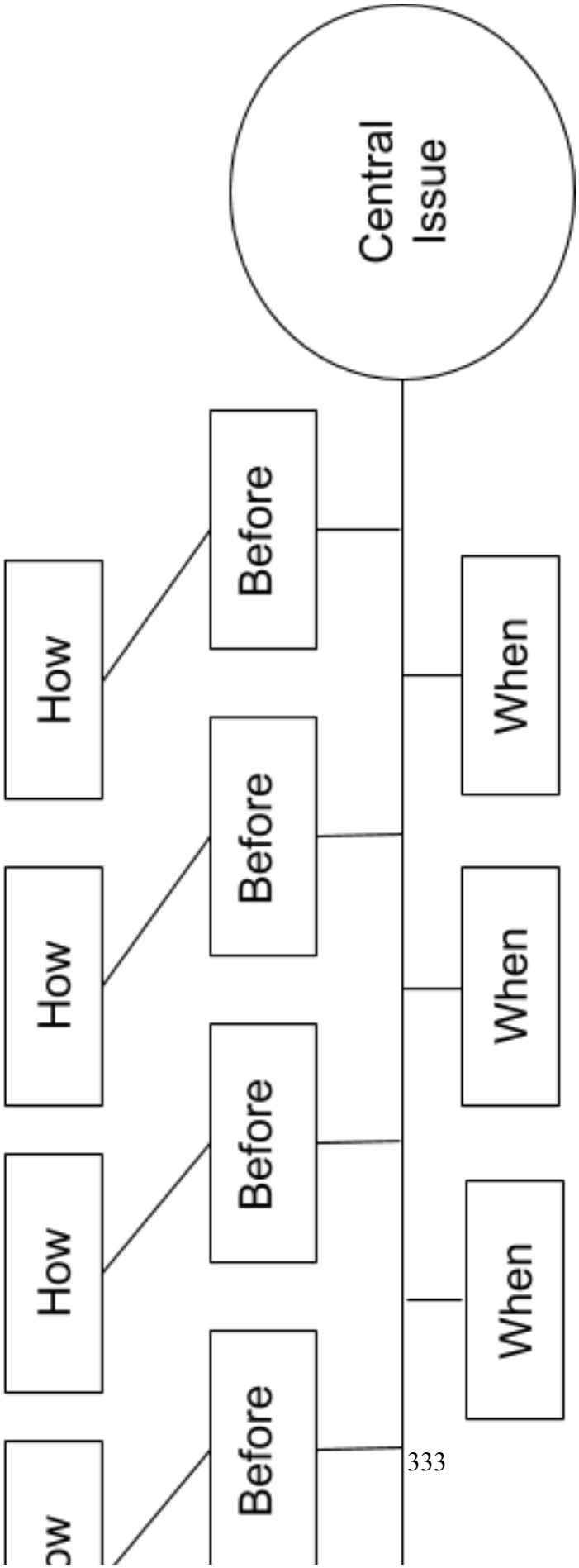
Appendix III


What Did We LEARN
What do We WANT to Know
What do We KNOW

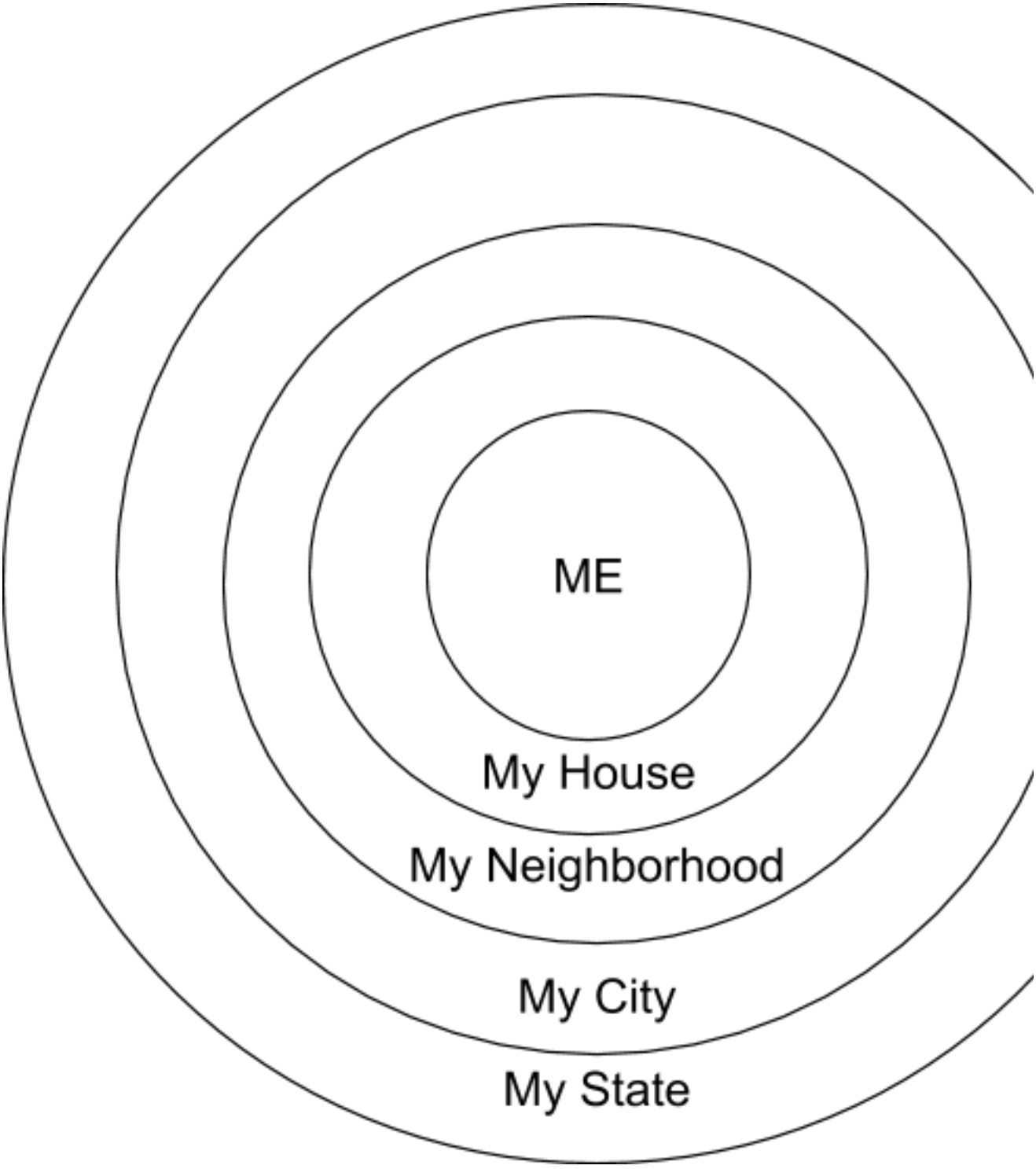
Appendix IV

 Plus Things that went well	Things we

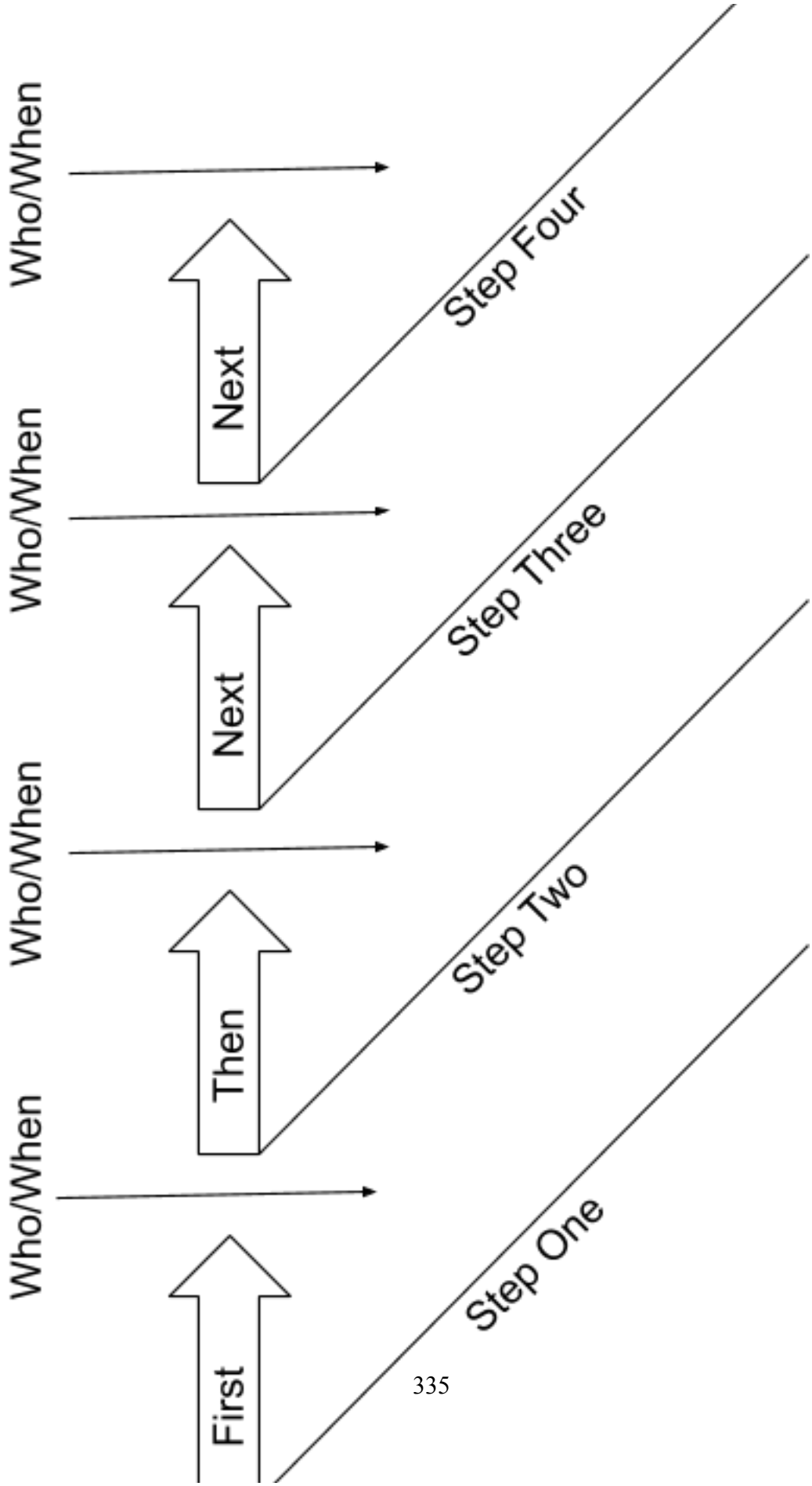
Appendix V

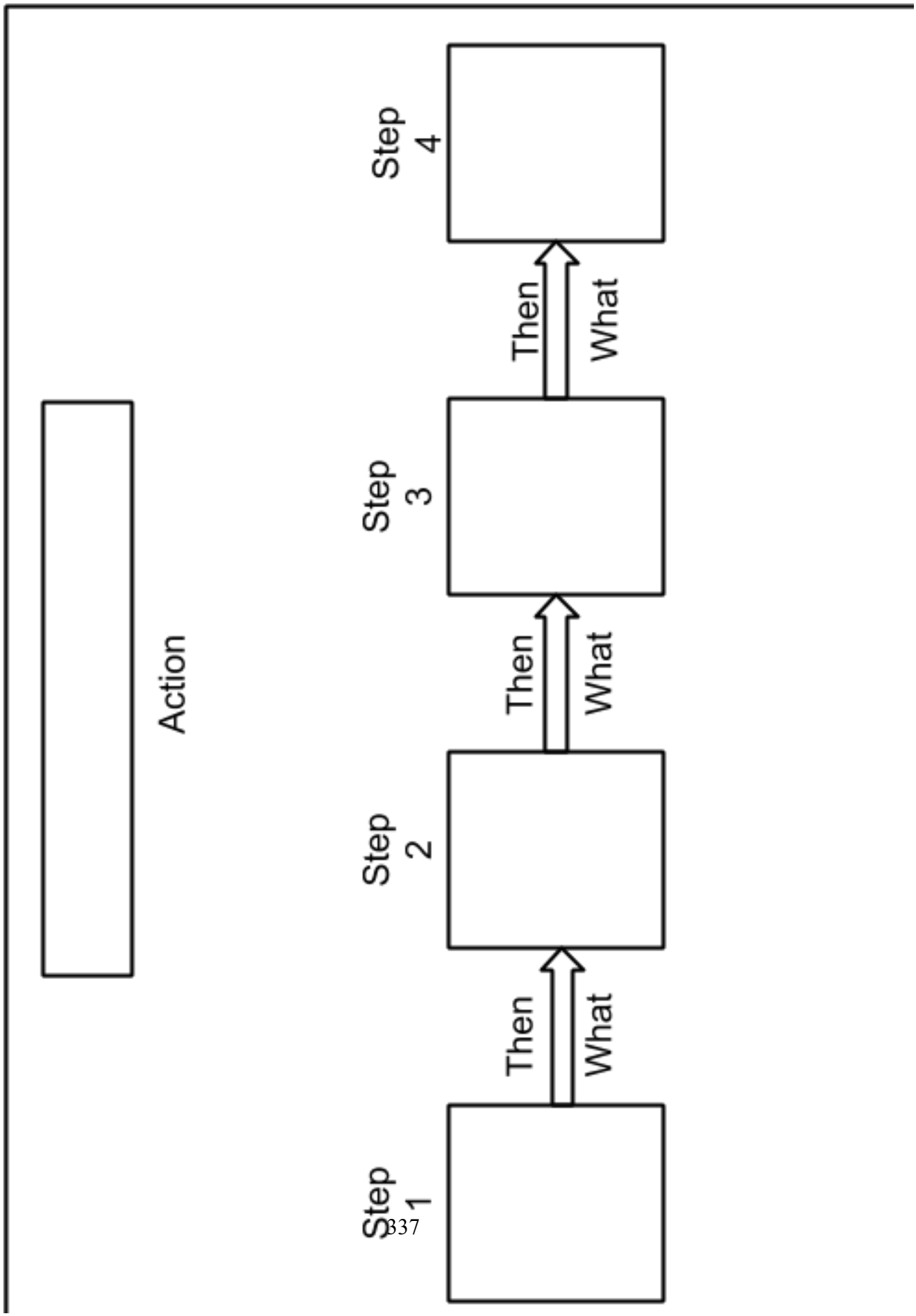

Central Issue
Before
How
When
Before
How
When
Before
How
When
Before
How

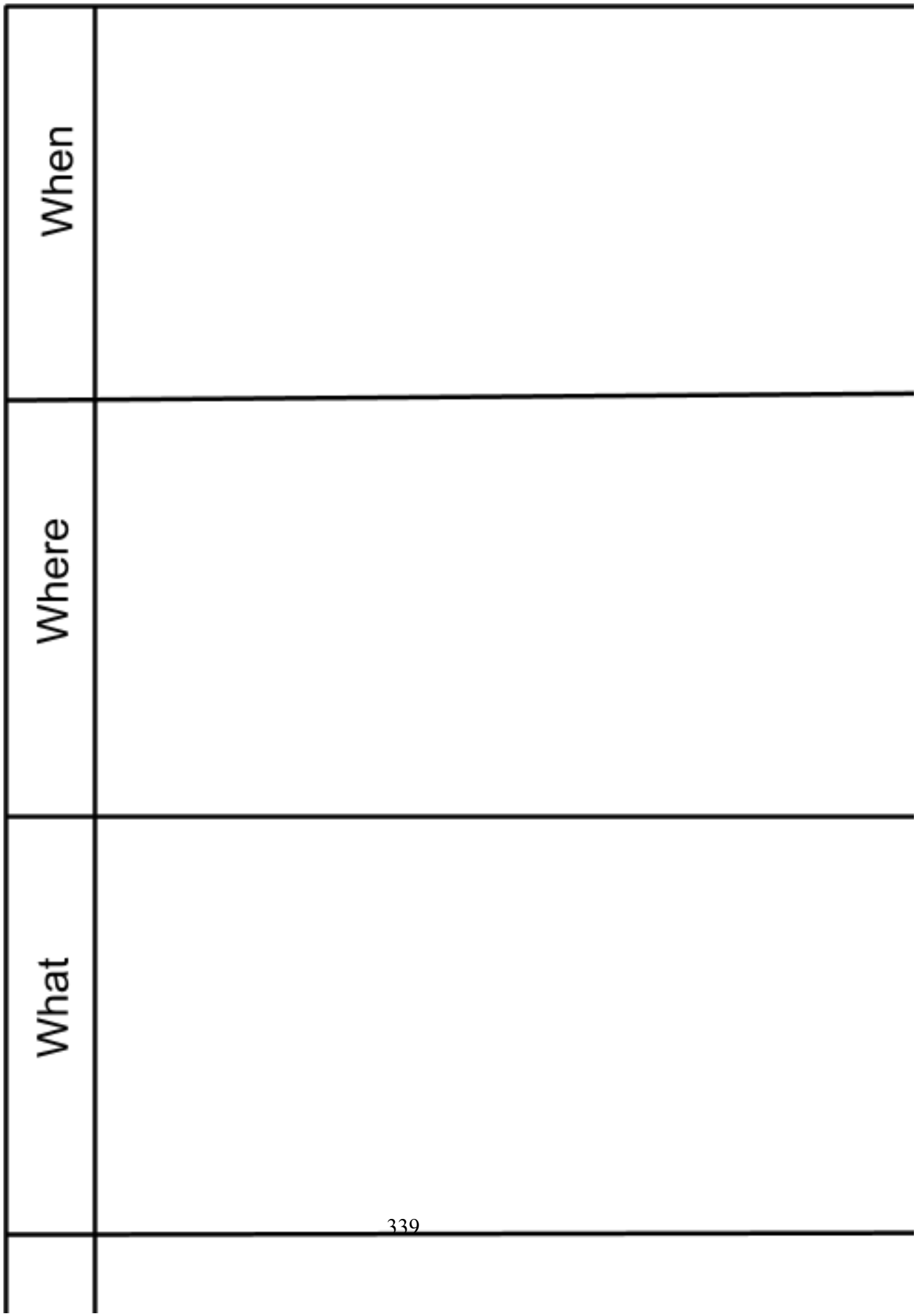
Appendix VI



Appendix VII


Who/When
Who/When
Who/When
Who/When
First
Then
Next
Next
Step One
Step Two
Step Three
Step Four


Action
Step 1
Then
What
Step 2
Then
What
Step 3
Then
What
Step 4


When
Where
What

Civic support - city and county offices (For instance: Mayor, City Council, Police, Firefighters,Senate/House representatives, City Departments: Parks/Rec, Animal Control, etc.)	**Service organizations** Kiwana's, Lion's/Lioness, Optimist, Rotary	**Local Businesses** Chamber of Commerce	**Education** Public school systems in the area, private schools, home school communities, technical educations, post-secondary education in the area
Natural Resources DNR, Forestry Department, USGS, Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife services	**Public Libraries & Archives**	**Local Media Outlets**	**Area Religious Communities**

Appendix VIII

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.

Civic support - city and county offices (For instance: Mayor, City Council, Police, Firefighters,Senate/House representatives, City Departments: Parks/Rec, Animal Control, etc.)	**Service organizations** Kiwana's, Lion's/Lioness, Optimist, Rotary	**Local Businesses** Chamber of Commerce	**Education** Public school systems in the area, private schools, home school communities, technical educations, post-secondary education in the area
Natural Resources DNR, Forestry Department, USGS, Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife services	**Public Libraries & Archives**	**Local Media Outlets**	**Area Religious Communities**

Think

On your own, write ideas you have about how your youth group could benefit from partnering 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._____

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 IX

Philoptochos Leadership Institute

It's a Neapolitan World

Valuing Human Diversity

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.

MOST	LEAST
T P I	T P I

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 if 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 X

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.

	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How
is						
won't						
did						
might						
should						
will						

Appendix XI

Directions: Tally the results of the survey for each question below, 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've organized your thoughts, we will come together in

the bigger group to see what kind of questions have emerged that may require more research.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Summarize key comments
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Appendix XII

THINK SHEET: In each square, record discussion points regarding the topic. (This will be done together on large paper)

Our objective	Our resources

Our information from surveys/research	Our partners

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 XII

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 stu
3. Give each student a copy of the following script.
4. Student A will read his/her lines out loud, but student B will comr lines in a nonverbal way.
5. Provide B with a secret emotional distraction that is written on a p example, student B may be in a rush, may be really bored, or maybe
6. After the dialogue, ask each student A to guess what emotion was 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?

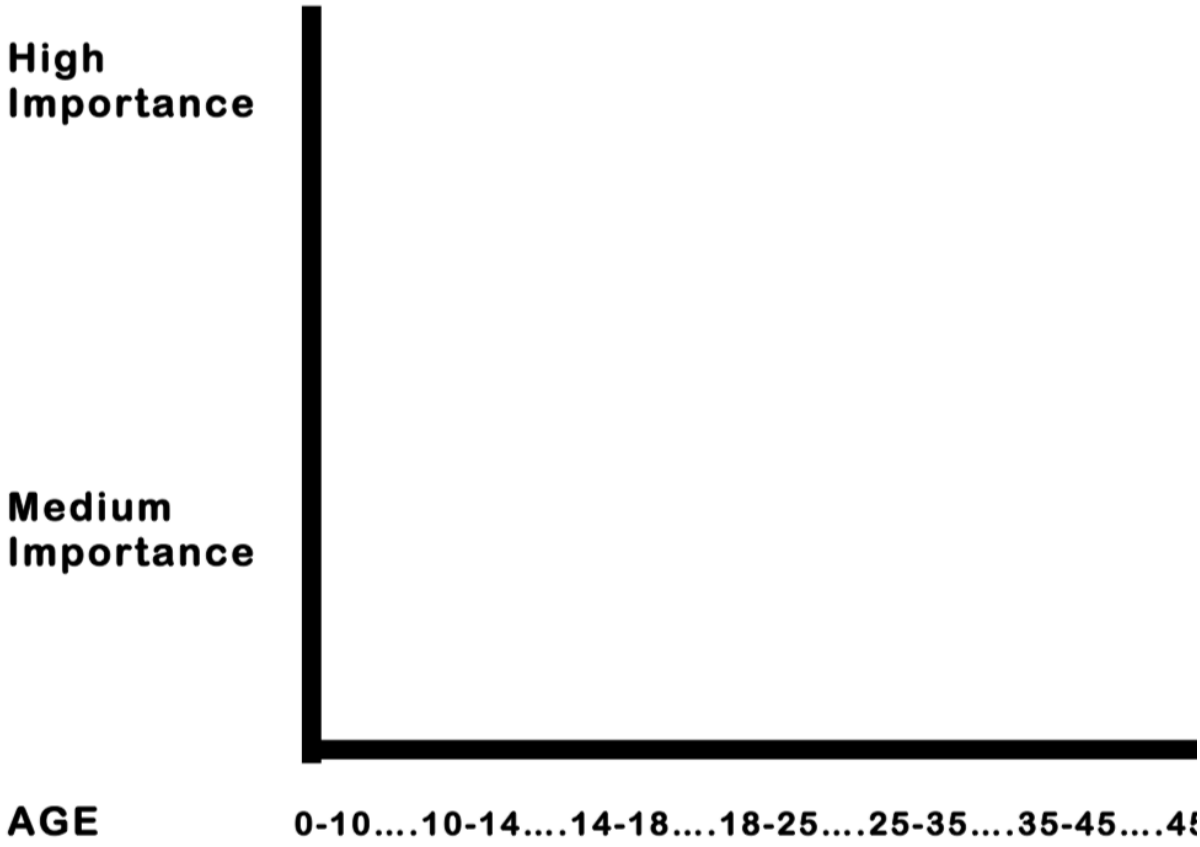
I hate when you get bossy.
A: Forget it. I'll find it myself.
B: Wait—I found it!

Appendix XIII

Norms of Collaboratic

1. Pausing
2. Paraphrasing
3. Posing Questions
4. Putting Ideas on the Table
5. Providing Data
6. Paying Attention to Self and Ot
7. Presuming Positive Intentions

Appendix XIV: Journey Lines



May want to write a narrative about one of the instances.

Directions

Appendix XV

Two Truths and a Lie

Time Required: 15-30 minutes

Start out by having every team member secretly write down two truths about t
lie on a small piece of paper – Do not reveal to anyone what you wrote down! C
completed this step, allow 10-15 minutes for open conversation – much like a c
everyone quizzes each other on their three questions. The idea is to convince o
actually a truth, while on the other hand, you try to guess other people's truths,
questions. Don't reveal your truths or lie to anyone – even if the majority of the
figured out! After the conversational period, gather in a circle and one by one re
your three statements and have the group vote on which one they think is the l
game competitively and award points for each lie you guess or for stumping otl
own lie. This game helps to encourage better communication in the office, as w
to know your coworkers better.

Appendix XVI: Guiding Questions Worksheet

- Based off of 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 impact the social justice/heritage need/topic we are discussing?

Appendix XVII: Action Planning Template

Goals

what are we trying to accomplish – concrete, tangible, winnable. What does vi
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 strat
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 work
particular issue is always more powerful and credible than a talking head spok
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
groups etc? What are the recruitment plan, rap, commitment, reminder and fo
use a 50% rule…that is what I expect will turn out based on the commitments.
people say yes, expect 50!

Scenario

what will happen, what does it look like? What are the beginning, middle and e
message/ story be told – visuals, words, props, and signs?

Appendix XVIII:

Roles of a Mentor

Key Concepts

- Identify qualities of effect mentors.
- To explore roles that mentors can play in the lives of children and youth.

RoSupplies

- 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 –

a. Who is a person who you trust or feel like you can talk to?
b. Why is that person important to you?
c. What qualities does that person have that makes them so important to you? Write down those qualities.

2. 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.)

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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 –

- comes from the Greek word meaning "enduring"—is defined as a trusted and sustained relationship between two or more people.
- 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
- 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

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Appendix XIX

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.
5. What are Attributes of a Community Problem Solver? What knowledge, skills, or characteristics do you are important?

. 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

1. RESEARCH - Ability to conduct a thorough and balanced investigation of the root causes of a local environmental and/or community issue.

2. ANALYSIS - Ability to assess various sources of information for credibility and bias.
3. COMMUNICATION - Ability to defend a position on an environmental issue both orally and in writing.
4. COOPERATION - Ability to work cooperatively with peers and adults toward a common end.
5. ADVOCACY - Ability to bring about a plan for sustainable improvements to the environment or community.
6. PROBLEM-SOLVING - Ability to make wise decisions and plans to solve environmental and community issues through the use of sound research.
7. REFLECTION - Ability to think critically about experiences so lessons can be learned.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY - Sense of personal responsibility for and commitment to the long-term well-being of the environment and the community.
2. CONFIDENCE - Belief in one's abilities to make a positive change in the environment and community.
3. INTERDEPENDENCE - Belief that it is both valuable and necessary to work together for a common purpose.
4. COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS - Sense of bonding with and respect for educators, community leaders, and other adults.
5. ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT - Personal sense of achievement and accomplishment in and out of school
6. SOCIAL RESPECT - Willingness to respectfully consider diverse points of view.
7. PROGRAM AFFINITY - Sense of connectedness to a national movement of students involved in Earth Force.

6. 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.

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Appendix XX

What is Youth Voice?

Key Concepts

- Youth Voice
- Community
- 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

1. 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?

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. Watch the following videos:

. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCjFQMr5oNo

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

4. 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.
5. 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.

. Youth Voice is the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society. – Adam Fletcher, Washington Youth Voice Handbook

a. According to Earth Force, youth voice can look like:

. Bringing young people out into their environment to observe the pros and cons of their surroundings.

i. 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.
ii. Allowing young people to guide group decision-making to determine the direction of their learning.
iii. Encouraging peer-to-peer mentoring, like pairing older students with younger students or asking students to work in pairs, learning together.

6. How will the group move forward to respect each other but also their 'youth voice' moving forward?

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Appendix XXI

Failing Safely a 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 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.

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 these 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:

1. Discuss the concept of goal setting SMART goals - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. What are some of their goals?
2. 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?

3. 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.
4. 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?

a. What is something you worry about?
b. Positive words are helpful.
c. It is ok, to not be ok.
d. Writing can get your feeling out – help to manage the ways you get mad or upset.

6. 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.

7. 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) _____.

7. 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?

8. 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.

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