

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS IN EVALUATION (Y-AP/E)

A Resource Guide For Translating
Research Into Practice

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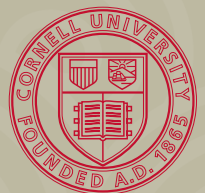
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The logo for the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, featuring a stylized arch composed of multiple overlapping lines in red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.

Acknowledgements

This resource guide represents the work of many scholars, who along with practitioners and youth have created the emerging field of youth participatory evaluation. We have reflected on this wealth of experience in order to emphasize the importance of youth-adult partnerships in this work. We have sought to collect and synthesize this rich information in a way that makes it accessible and useful to community organizations.

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table of contents

Introduction to the Resource Guide	4-5
• A Brief History of Participatory Evaluation	4
• Purpose and Scope of this Guide	5
TIP SHEET 1	
Understand the Fundamentals of Evaluation Research	6-8
• Use Existing Curricula & Resources	7
• Collaborate with an “Outside” Evaluator	8
TIP SHEET 2	
Prepare for the Most Significant Challenges of Y-AP/E	9-11
• Acknowledge the Inexperience and Concerns of Many Adults	10
• Adapt to the Complexities of Youths’ Lives	10
• Respond to Existing Structures and Norms within Organizations	11
TIP SHEET 3	
Make a Case for the Significance of Y-AP/E	12-16
• Reach Consensus on the Core Components and Principles of Y-AP/E	13
• Articulate the Benefits of Y-AP/E	14
TIP SHEET 4	
Create an Organizational Culture for Y-AP/E to Flourish	18-22
• Pay attention to Logistics and Group Dynamics	19
• Create Ongoing Opportunities for Collective Reflection	20
• Affirmatively Address Issues of Power and Role	21
TIP SHEET 5	
Maximize the Relevance and Utilization of Evaluation	23-29
• Choose the Correct Research Questions	24
• Maximize the Diversity of Youth Researchers and Community Voices	25
• Careful Selection of Methods	26
• Strategically Share Results and Recommendations	28
Practical and Engaging Data Analysis Strategies	30-32
The Short List: Recommended Reading for Field Practitioners	33-35
Annotated Literature Review: Essential Articles and Reports for Researchers	36
Literature that Involves Research in a School Setting	44
Literature that Cites the Benefits of Youth Involvement	45

introduction to the Resource Guide

A Brief History of Participatory Evaluation

Participation is viewed generally as a positive activity, certainly in the context of democratic societies. Although still contested in some quarters, the idea of stakeholder participation in evaluation is widely accepted within the evaluation community. Among the many purposes of participatory evaluation two are of most interest to this Resource Guide. First, participatory evaluation has a pragmatic aim, and serves primarily as a method for strengthening groups, projects, and organizations. Second, participatory evaluation aims to be emancipatory or transformative. Its goal is to empower vulnerable populations, both by including them as evaluation partners and by focusing on issues of importance to them.

It is puzzling that participation has been reserved for adults, for the most part. Until more recently youth have been excluded from participation in evaluation. It is only over the past decade that youth have begun to be viewed as contributors to knowledge development and as key stakeholders in the study of issues and conditions that impact their lives. In other words, youth are now seen as potential contributors to the evaluation process and to the dissemination and use of evaluation findings. This expanded conceptualization of “participation” has led directly to a new field of inquiry known as “youth participatory evaluation.”

As the field has grown, different models have emerged. In some cases, youth participatory evaluation aims to make the process as youth-driven as possible. Youth, for example, identify the issues to be researched, organize, and then implement the resulting study. Adults serve as advisors only when needed. On the other end of the spectrum, youth participatory evaluation places youth in a more subordinate role. Adult-driven models see youth as advisors who participate in ways largely determined by the adult researchers.

These are not the only models. Indeed, there is a growing body of research demonstrating the positive impacts of youth-adult partnership. That is, when youth and adults work together over time, on things that matter (e.g., organizational governance, community organizing, collaborative action, projects, decision making) good things are likely to happen. Positive youth development and empowerment are promoted, adult staffs feel more confident and competent, organizations become more responsive and effective, and ultimately, communities are strengthened.

It is but a logical extension to hypothesize those similar positive impacts will occur when youth and adults work together as partners in evaluation. Indeed, while there is limited research on the issue, it does appear as though powerful things can happen when youth and adults identify a pressing problem, and then work

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collaboratively to analyze the issue, reach conclusions, and then act to publicize and garner support for their recommendations. A quick perusal of the literature, as documented subsequently in the annotated literature review, shows that regardless of the method – be it community survey, focus group, observation, or photo-voice – that Youth Adult Partnership in Evaluation (Y-AP/E) has the potential to have significant impacts on development, projects, policies, and procedures.

Purpose and Scope of this Resource Guide

The potential of Y-AP/E is not being reached as much as it could, or in our opinion, as much as it should. We have developed this Resource Guide to encourage more organizations to implement Y-AP/E, and to do so with greater efficiency and quality. Toward that end, we offer a series of “tip sheets” that identify the leverage points and best practices that are most critical to the success of Y-AP/E projects.

This Resource Guide is not a curriculum on how to do evaluation research. We do not provide guidelines on how to write a survey, for example, or discuss how to conduct interviews or community observations. Thorough and practical curricula have already been written. In the first section of this Resource Guide, we provide an overview of some of them, as well as citations for

accessible and practical texts (see Tip Sheet #1). Evaluation can be learned through self-study of previous reports and articles, as well as through learning by doing. We note, additionally, that other support is often available. Increasingly, as part of their educational training, staff gain research skills. They can potentially share this knowledge with others. Often, there are university-based researchers or extension specialists who are able to help organizations design and carry out evaluation research projects.

A “how to” understanding of evaluation is only half the equation. And, it is not always the most important half of Y-AP/E. This is because the process of conducting evaluation and the ways that youth and adults work together are often more critical, ultimately, than the technical expertise of the evaluators. Indeed, there are some evaluators who posit evaluation is more of a process of engagement than a fixed set of technical methods.

Evaluation is a multi-phased endeavor, with many embedded steps and activities. *Not everything is of equal importance, however, when it comes to implementing effective Y-AP/E.* Project managers constantly need to choose what they will pay close attention to and what is not absolutely necessary. Scholars of organizational change focus attention to “leverage points” or those key processes and moments in implementation that really make a difference in the overall success or failure of an initiative. Leverage points are those influences within an organiza-

tion where close attention can effect a substantial change in the organization itself. Often leverage follows the principle of economy of means: where the best results come not from large-scale efforts but from small well-focused actions.

This Resource Guide seeks to identify the most critical “leverage points” which have emerged from the research literature on youth participatory research and Y-AP in evaluation. Our assumption is that those project managers who can focus their time and expertise on the most critical leverage points will be best positioned for success. They and their organizations will benefit from the positive “ripple effects” that come with choosing the proper leverage points. Over the past decade, researchers have been working with practitioners and with youth to identify the most powerful leverage points for success. In this Resource Guide, we summarize what research has discovered. Our analysis is based on a synthesis of over 40 books and articles on the subject. (See the Annotated Literature Review: Essential Articles and Reports for Researchers and the Recommended Reading for Field Practitioners).

To present the findings from research, we have prepared five tip sheets and a list of data analysis strategies. Each tip sheet identifies a fundamental element of success, and leverage points for achieving success.

Understand the Fundamentals of Evaluation Research

evaluation is a paradox On the one hand, it is familiar to all of us as a comfortable and safe activity. We all, for example, conduct evaluations of movies, TV shows, and restaurants. At the same time, evaluation is unfamiliar and somewhat scary. We often think that evaluation is more about “judging” and “got ya” than it is about “improving” and “learning together.”

Evaluation, at its core, is about collecting information about a specific issue that is important to a given organization or community. Evaluation is about the future. The aim is to use the collected information to make positive recommendations to strengthen a program, project or a policy.

Evaluation research is a systematic process. There are four phases that need to be implemented with intentionality and rigor: 1) identify the study purpose and research questions; 2) select a study methodology and collect data; 3) analyze and interpret the data; and 4) formulate conclusions and recommendations.

As we reviewed the literature, a fundamental finding of success emerged: All of the organizations, schools, and community groups that successfully engaged in Y-AP/E began the process with some expertise and experience. Successful projects took the time to do their homework. They reviewed and used existing resource guides and curricula written specifically for field professionals and youth (Leverage Point #1). Additionally, many projects invited collaborators with evaluation experience to join the initiative (Leverage Point #2).

LEVERAGE POINT #1: Use Existing Curricula and Resources

There is absolutely no need to recreate the wheel. Over the past decade, strong practitioner and researcher collaborators have prepared useful curricula and resources for Y-AP/E teams. These materials describe the philosophies and strategies of participatory research; they provide detailed steps in doing evaluations, and provide guidance in designing surveys and interview schedules. Many provide activities that can be used to help the Y-AP/E teams accomplish these tasks.

We offer a list of some of the most often used curricula and resources. All of the materials have their own emphases, strengths, and limitations. There is no curriculum or resource that will work for all Y-AP/E groups.

THE BOTTOM LINE: It is worth taking the time to examine a selection of these materials. Find what seems most accessible, practical, and useful for your own Y-AP/E group.

Here are some curricula and resources that are especially applicable and practical across a range of different settings.

CURRICULUM

- Arnold, Mary (2009). Participatory Evaluation with Youth: Building Skills for Community Action. University of Oregon Extension.
(http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/about/pod-yig/partic_eval09.pdf)
- Camino, Linda and Shep Zeldin, Carrie Mook, and Cailin O'Connor (2004). Youth and Adult Leaders for Program Improvement: A practical guide for program assessment and action planning.
(<http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthadultpartnership/yalpe-workbook/>)
- Checkaway, Barry and Katie Richards-Shuster. Participatory Evaluation with Young People. University of Michigan School of Social Work.
(<http://ssw.umich.edu/public/currentprojects/youthandcommunity/resourcesPublications.html>)
- Reflect and Improve: A tool Kit for Engaging Youth and Adults as Partners in Program Evaluation, Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2005

RESOURCES

- Greene, Chad (2002) Evaluation Technical Notes
UNICEF Evaluation Office
(http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_13486.html near bottom of page)
- Sabo, Kim Flores (2007). Youth participatory evaluation: Strategies for engaging young people. San Francisco, Jossey Bass.
(<http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0787983926.html>).
- Zeldin, Shep and Jessica Collura (2010). Being Y-AP Savvy: A primer on creating and sustaining youth-adult partnerships. University of Wisconsin-Extension
(<http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthadultpartnership/2011/07/28/being-y-ap-savvy-a-primer-on-creating-sustaining-youth-adult-partnerships/>)

LEVERAGE POINT #2:
**Collaborate with
an “Outside”
Evaluator**

It is ideal to recruit an experienced evaluator to collaborate with the Y-AP/E team. Such individuals can contribute their knowledge of applied research and evaluation and provide an “outsider’s” perspective. They can work with the Y-AP/E team to help ensure that the project stays focused and remains manageable.

Collaborators can be found through local universities and colleges. They can also be located through intermediary organizations, foundations, and coalitions.

■ Institutions of higher education can be hard to navigate. But, there are central points of contact that will be able to help you out. Applied researchers and evaluators can typically be found through on campus centers of service learning, volunteerism, public service, or evaluation. These Centers are set up to link organizations with faculty and staff.

■ Be sure to ask about graduate students. They often have the necessary expertise and skills, are reliable, are looking for opportunities to contribute and gain work experience. A small stipend will encourage graduate student participation. Most have taken out loans to go to school, and they will appreciate support for transportation, materials, or for their contributed time.

■ Local community foundations, United Way and other philanthropies, and community coalitions might provide promising leads. Staff in these types of organizations often work with applied researchers and evaluators, and keep directories of such persons.

As with the identification and retention of any new resource, networking is key. The goal is to locate at least one person with the type of experience that is required for the Y-AP/E project. From there, “working the network” should help you identify others who might be appropriate.

Finding the right “outside” evaluator takes some detective work. But, it is worth the time. The Y-AP/E project will have an additional member, and will be better positioned to meet its goals.

KEY LITERATURE FOR TIP SHEET 1:

- Foster-Fishman, Pennie; Law, Kristen M.; Lichty, Lauren F.; Aoun, Christina
Youth ReACT for Social Change: A Method for Youth Participatory Action Research. *American Journal of Community Psychology* (2010) 46:67-83
- Ren, Julie Yunyi; Langhout, Regina Day
A Recess Evaluation with the Players: Taking Steps Toward Participatory Action Research. *American Journal of Community Psychology* (2010) 46:124-138
- Strack, Robert W.; Magil, Cathleen; McDonagh, Kara. Engaging Youth Through Photovoice. *Health Promotion Practice*, January 2004, No. 1, 49-58

Prepare for the Most Significant Challenges of Y-AP/E

almost all evaluations in the United States are conducted by adults only. In essence, adults are collecting data and making judgments about the policies and programs that influence the lives of young people, but the youth have no involvement in the process at all. As we read the literature, there are few analyses or practical discussions about how youth and adults can conduct evaluations as partners. That being said, there does appear to be an emerging expectation that youth should be key actors in evaluation research.

As we reviewed the literature, it became clear that there were some common challenges experienced by all Y-AP/E projects. Some projects were successful in meeting these challenges. Others were not. *The main factor that differentiated the successful from the less successful projects was the extent to which stakeholders were aware of the challenges and took them seriously.* The less successful initiatives seemed to underestimate the significance of the challenges, failed to deal with them directly, and/or hoped that the challenges would somehow resolve themselves and go away.

We discovered a fundamental finding of success: being keenly aware of the special challenges which arise when youth and adults work together, and addressing them throughout the duration of the project. These challenges stem from the inexperience of many adults (Leverage Point #1), the complexities of working with youth (Leverage Point #2) and issues related to existing structures and norms within organizations (Leverage Point #3).

But as noted above, it is critical that project coordinators be aware of these challenges before initiating a Y-AP/E project. Pondering and preparing for these challenges in your way and with your colleagues, in consideration of your own circumstances, is the best strategy for high quality Y-AP/E.

LEVERAGE POINT #1:
**Acknowledge
the Inexperience
and Concerns of
Many Adults**

Very few adults are accustomed to sharing power with youth, especially around issues of evaluation. This is not a put-down of adults, but rather recognition that youth-adult partnership is not a normative practice in the United States. This context represents a significant challenge, given that the purpose of Y-AP/E is to create organizational spaces and opportunities where youth can participate meaningfully (i.e., not as tokens) in decisions that affect them.

Faced with difficult and new challenges, adults (or youth) often become scared or intimidated. When adults are inexperienced in a certain task, they will often fall back on familiar patterns of behavior. They might perceive youths' desire for involvement as a challenge to their authority. Research also shows that sometimes adults will reverse their behavior - and relinquish all control and accountability to youth. This clearly is not partnership. Be aware of these dynamics and be prepared to deal with them. Adults are not trying to be malicious. They are simply showing their inexperience in partnering with young people on things that matter.

Research also indicates that many adults are skeptical of youths' ability or interest to engage in collaborative evaluations. Again, this is not to discount adults. Since few adults have observed youth participating in research, they do not know what youth are capable of achieving. They have not seen, first hand, that youth can, and will, be valuable contributors to the process. The lesson from research: start with the assumption that adults want to be partners with youth, and act accordingly. Early on, provide opportunities for youth and adults to get to know each other, and most importantly, create situations where adults can directly observe the competence and commitment of young people.

LEVERAGE POINT #2:
**Adapt to the
Complexities of
Youths' Lives**

A significant challenge to Y-AP/E is that many youth are extremely busy. What looks like a lack of interest or follow through is often a symptom of something else: a lack of transportation, the need to care for siblings, conflicts with work, or competing schedules with school, extracurricular, or service commitments. Youth constantly have to prioritize their activities since they have multiple commitments and distractions.

Given this situation, it is often difficult to maintain the interest of youth over time. At some points, the evaluation process might feel like a never ending homework assignment. Almost all youth like collecting data, but many young people (like adults) will lose patience if the data analysis is prolonged. They want to draw conclusions and make recommendations. Youth want to be doing something that makes a difference right now!

It is also true that almost all youth are inexperienced in conducting evaluations, interacting with adults as partners, or collaborating with peers as part of a team. Young people bring varying developmental capacities, skill levels and learning styles to Y-AP/E projects. Keeping everyone engaged and productive can be a perplexing task for project coordinators. Recognizing and being comfortable with this as "normal" is necessary. Planning for periods of youth disinterest and for how to divide tasks when not everyone has the same ability or motivation are critical challenges for coordinators, but ones that can be overcome.

LEVERAGE POINT #3: **Respond to Existing Structures and Norms within Organizations**

Participatory evaluation is naturally unpredictable, and this also holds true for Y-AP/E. The research literature is full of case examples of the many ways that organizations may not offer a hospitable climate for Y-AP/E to flourish. Project coordinators will need to respond to the existing structures and norms and either attempt to change or modify these conditions, or adapt to them.

When the organization is based on strict adherence to hierarchy, tradition, and established structures, there will likely be tension when the evaluation research begins. Schools are the obvious example, but similar challenges can be significant in youth programs, community organizations, or local coalitions. It is important that project coordinators be prepared for possible push back from organizations as the YAP/E project proceeds. As youth become more involved in the project, they are likely to question current rules or procedures. This simple search for explanation or discussion by youth could be perceived as questioning authority or threatening to the status quo of the organization or institution. This is especially true when youth seek to discuss their concerns around issues of race, ethnicity, and social justice.

Almost all settings have formal and informal power hierarchies where certain adults wield more influence in the environment. These individuals use their power to facilitate or block change. The challenge is to figure out how to engage their support of Y-AP/E, or at a minimum, be neutral at the initiation of the project. It is especially important to do the preparatory work and relationship building to create a hospitable environment for young people. Enabling youth to make decisions in traditional (and, often, untraditional) environments can be beneficial to the project, especially when power-wielding adults are included in early agreements and participate in setting project direction.

Y-AP/E has to start in a physical setting. Young people need a space of their own for Y-AP/E, even in today's techno-savvy world. The room should be large enough for the group to sit comfortably, or move around for activities. Ideally, it should be a private space, not in a location where other groups meet simultaneously. Finding a space to meet and store project materials is always a challenge. Being prepared with a good space for Y-AP/E is likely to ensure early success of the project.

KEY LITERATURE FOR TIP SHEET 2:

- Brown, Kelli R. McCormack; McDermott, Robert J.; Bryant, Carol A.; Forthofer, Melinda S.
Youth as Community Researchers. *Community Youth Development Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003, (Especially addresses leverage point 1.)
- Camino, Linda
Pitfalls and Promising Practices of Youth-Adult Partnerships: An Evaluator's Reflections. *Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2005, (Especially addresses leverage point 1.)
- Ozer, Emily J; Riffertman, Miranda; Wanis, Maggie G
Participatory Action Research (PAR) in Middle School: Opportunities, Constraints, and Key Processes. *American Journal of Community Psychology* (2010) 46: 152-166, (Especially addresses leverage point 3.)
- Zimmerman, Kristen; and London, Jonathan
Getting to Go: Building Organizational Capacity to Engage in Youth-led Research, Evaluation, and Planning. *Community Youth Development Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003, (Addresses leverage points 1-3)

Make a Case for the Significance of Y-AP/E

remember! Y-AP/E is something new and unfamiliar to many organizations.

Consequently, adults and youth will need time to become comfortable with Y-AP/E before committing to the initiative. There will be many who will wish to participate, but they will require some support to get there.

A fundamental finding of success emerged from the research literature: Effective project managers are able to “make the case” for Y-AP/E, and in so doing, are able to make stakeholders comfortable with Y-AP/E and secure their active involvement. Two strategies are used. Project managers help stakeholders reach a common understanding of the core components and principles of Y-AP/E (Leverage Point #1). Additionally, project managers are able to clearly articulate the potential benefits of Y-AP/E to colleagues and other stakeholders (Leverage Point #2).

LEVERAGE POINT #1:
**Reach Consensus
on the Core
Components
and Principles
of Y-AP/E**

Phrases such as “youth-adult partnership” and “evaluation” can be confusing or intimidating to many stakeholders. Effective project managers take the time to clearly define these terms to make them real, concrete, and practical. They work with stakeholders to reach consensus as to what are the most critical core components of Y-AP/E.

What are Youth-Adult Partnerships?

The lesson from practice is that the meaning of Youth-Adult Partnership (Y-AP) should be determined at the onset, during the initial phase of the Y-AP/E project. Defining Y-AP, early on, sets a standard, an expectation for the design and implementation of the project. It sets the parameter of how people will work together as a team.

We define “Y-AP/E” as the practice of youth and adults jointly working together to identify, research, make recommendations, and take collective action to address problems of mutual concern. Y-AP/E has certain core assumptions that define the practice and set standards for quality:

■ Y-AP/E is about multiple youth working with multiple adults over time. There is an expectation that youth and adults will get to know each other as colleagues. Y-AP is not about one adult supervising a group of youth.

■ Y-AP/E values inclusivity. The assignment of roles and division of labor within Y-AP/E is not determined by age. Rather, it is based on the specific interests, time availability, skills, and networks that each individual brings to the endeavor.

■ Y-AP/E does not assume that adults have the requisite life experience or wisdom, or that only youth are prepared to bring fresh energy or the most legitimate view to a particular issue.

It is important to stress that every Y-AP/E project ultimately arrives at its own definition. This is how ownership is promoted. We have found that beginning the process with the above definition and parameters greatly enhances the consensus building process.

THE BOTTOM LINE: All individuals are needed, and deserve to participate in defining Y-AP/E, and equally important, in finding their proper role within a Y-AP/E project. This process of exploration is critical. As youth and adults engage in such discussions, they move beyond an “us versus them” perspective to one of greater collegiality, cohesiveness and collective purpose.

What is “evaluation?”

In “pitching” and “explaining” Y-AP/E to potential collaborators and funders, it is also important to take the time to discuss the concept of evaluation.

People need to hear that evaluation is a process of collaboration, inquiry, and creative problem solving. According to Michael Quinn Patton (1997): “Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.”

It is useful to speak of evaluation as a three pronged activity involving investigation, education, and action. Evaluation is a structured process that brings people together to learn about, discuss, and try to solve pressing problems. The interpersonal processes of youth and adults working together, of finding common ground, is as important as the more technical processes of data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

There are many reasons to evaluate:

- 1 Accountability: to one’s funder, to the staff, to the clients, and to the community;
- 2 Improvement: to enhance the quality of existing programs, projects and policies;
- 3 Knowledge Development: to plan future programs and projects;
- 4 Social Justice: to demonstrate whether the most vulnerable populations are receiving appropriate and effective services.

In many Y-AP/E efforts, the aim of evaluation is to create conditions which empower participants to create more effective organizations. Participatory evaluation is a developmental process where, through the involvement of youth (and staff) in reflection, decision making, knowledge creation and collective action, individuals and organizations can be changed for the better.

THE BOTTOM LINE: It is necessary to help stakeholders take a broad view: Y-AP/E is about multiple youth working with multiple adults to identify and solve common problems. Y-AP/E is multi-faceted. It includes elements of shared discovery, deliberation and decision making, and collective action. That said, it is most crucial that participants ultimately define Y-AP/E in ways that make sense for the project being designed and implemented. This process of definition will ground the group and set standards for quality.

LEVERAGE POINT #2: **Articulate the Benefits of Y-AP/E**

Everybody is busy. In order to convince stakeholders to fully invest their time and expertise in Y-AP/E, there ought to be a big payoff. If we are to expect practitioners, residents, and youth to engage in collaborative evaluation, they must see the potential value of their work.

It is for this reason that effective managers need to fully and consistently put forth the rationale for Y-AP/E. They need to create their own “pitch” and speak cogently about its benefits. Fortunately, there is a strong and growing body of research that supports these efforts, some of which is summarized below.

Enhanced Confidence, Competence and Social Networks among Youth and Staff

The research is clear that strong youth-adult partnerships promote positive youth development. The benefits are broad and deep. For example, when youth are involved in assessing and designing projects, their sense of empowerment is strengthened. Youth gain a greater sense of responsibility for themselves, their organizations, and their communities. As youth feel valued by adults, their self-confidence is strengthened.

Y-AP/E also promotes skill development and social competence. Youth learn the fundamentals of conducting research, such as issue identification, methods of data collection, and data analysis. At the same time, they develop skills such as public speaking, critical thinking, team work, and professional conduct.

Finally, youth build their social capital. They gain access to adult networks, advisors, and mentors. These new relationships, as well as those formed with peers, provide young people with greater awareness and access to educational and employment opportunities.

Adult staff benefit in many of the same ways. When staff partner with youth on things that matter, they also feel more empowered, and develop a deeper sense of mastery. The staff sees that they can work with youth in new ways, and that youth respond positively to partnership-oriented approaches.

By getting to “know” youth in a deeper way, staffs increase their confidence which in turn leads them to do their jobs most effectively. YAP/E is particularly satisfying because it meets the generativity needs of adults. Staff feel positive about themselves because they are passing on their expertise and wisdom to the next generation. And like youth, adult staff also gain analytic skills. Throughout the research process, they get a chance to reflect on their work and their organizations, and develop new goals and ambitions.

THE BOTTOM LINE: YAP/E has multiple benefits for youth and adults. Youth become motivated to contribute which in turns leads to an increased sense of connectedness to their organizations. They gain valuable “insider” knowledge, such as understanding power and alliance building, and skills that will help them succeed within group settings. Adult staff develop greater skills in how to work with and support youth development, and in so doing, become more motivated and prepared to contribute to the organization.

Organizational Benefits: Representation, Quality, and Reputation

Research indicates multiple organizational benefits when youth partner with adult staff. The first change observed is typically greater representation of youth in organizational decision making. Quite often, youth are not involved in decision making in their own organizations, even though they have a clear interest in participating. Y-AP/E provides a vehicle for their participation. It allows youth to move from the margins of organizational decision making to the center of problem identification, analysis, and change. They move from being the objects of knowledge to being knowledge producers.

Youth workers, community workers, and adult volunteers, are often at the periphery of organizational or community decision making. One clear benefit of YAP/E is that the process can also enhance their representation by elevating their voices and making prominent their ideas.

Over time, enhanced representation and the addition of new voices into influential organizational discussions lead to the expectation that young people and staff will be collaborators in confronting important issues. Further, the organization starts to hear, first hand, the interests and concerns of the young people it is serving. These processes ultimately contribute to improved experiences. Because organizations have more direct and authentic understandings of youth, staff are better prepared to implement quality programming. When youth recognize that the organization respects young people, they become more committed and attend at a higher frequency. They also become more likely to recruit their peers to attend. Consequently, the organizational culture is refreshed and improved.

The research also indicates that organizations that fully embrace Y-AP/E are held in high esteem in their communities. They become viewed as model organizations, as places that provide quality youth development services and are able to more effectively reach new community members (youth and adults) and organizations. This approach and reputation also makes the organization more appealing to potential funders.

Benefits for Communities

Many community leaders endorse YAP/E because it helps to prepare youth to be the “next generation” of public and nonprofit leaders. Existing research is supportive of this perspective: When youth are engaged in quality service with supportive adults, they are more likely to participate in future community affairs.

As they become engaged in partnerships with adults – identifying problems, researching issues, and developing strategies for improvement – attitudes toward youth begin to shift. Specifically, many community leaders, observing the competence of youth, move from being a Y-AP/E skeptic to a Y-AP/E champion.

A variety of benefits begin to accrue. Studies indicate that youth raise new issues in the public sphere and that their involvement changes the tone of public processes. In some communities, coalitions and alliances become motivated to take on new youth-oriented issues and to involve youth in the processes of deliberation. In other communities, agencies and organizations become motivated to integrate Y-AP/E into their own operations and projects.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Adults need to observe the competence and motivation of youth. When they see youth and adults accomplishing things together, it leads to the expectation that youth should be involved in community matters. The benefits of Y-AP/E begin to grow and become institutionalized.

Positive Impact on the Evaluation Process

It is not simply that Y-AP/E sets new organizational expectations and standards for excellence. It strengthens the capacity of the organization to conduct evaluations of their programs that are both useful and high in quality. Youth often employ creative methods which add richness and depth to the evaluation. They are also able to access harder to reach samples, such as homeless youth or youth living in economically challenged neighborhoods, and may be more effective in obtaining reliable information from their peers than are adults.

Development of evaluation tools is another area where youth and adults working in partnership can benefit the evaluation process. Youth ensure that survey language and questions are “youth friendly” which can greatly enhance data quality. We also have learned the value of youth and adults jointly discussing the meaning and implications of evaluation findings which can enhance the use of data for quality improvement and can strengthen programming. During these “data dialogue” sessions, young people validate the accuracy of findings, affirming the extent to which they are true reflections of perceived experience and also identify gaps in knowledge which require further investigation. One of the hallmarks of the participatory evaluation approach is the inclusion of subjects or communities studied in analyzing and interpreting data – which not only enriches discussion but can lead to greater utilization of the findings.

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Create an Organizational Culture for Y-AP/E to Flourish

it is important to remember that

the organizational culture will influence the quality of Y-AP/E and that, over time, Y-AP/E projects will influence the organizational culture. Effective managers, therefore, seek to create a “good fit” between the organization and the Y-AP/E project. When this fit exists, the organization benefits greatly.

As we reviewed the research literature, a fundamental finding of success emerged. Effective project managers were those who ensured that the Y-AP/E initiative was administered and implemented consistent with the highest organizational standards. Toward that end, project managers focused on three leverage points: they 1) paid close attention to logistics and group dynamics, 2) created ongoing opportunities for collective reflection, and 3) affirmatively addressed issues of power and role.

LEVERAGE POINT #1:
**Pay attention
to Logistics and
Group Dynamics**

The process of evaluation requires ongoing attention, timely follow-up and coordination to ensure continuity of effort over time. Any organization that takes on Y-AP/E will need a coordinator, a dedicated individual, to handle logistical and administrative duties. We recommend that this role be held by a staff member or teacher. Why? Typically, adults go to the organization every day. Youth do not. This consistent availability ensures that issues are dealt with in a timely manner. Y-AP/E always requires the coordination of multiple people and groups. Having someone available to put out logistical fires, communicate with stakeholders, and perhaps most importantly, sustain project momentum is a role that is best suited to a staff member.

Case studies and practitioner experience indicate that this logistical role is important for all steps in the Y-AP/E process. For example, consider what it takes to collect data. First, it is often necessary to secure parental permission so that researchers can interview, photograph or record participants who are under age 18. This must occur before the data are collected. A coordinator needs to ensure that enough time is scheduled for the data collection, not an easy task given that adults and youth are often busy. On some occasions, providing meals to the researchers is a task that falls to the project coordinator. And, of course, arranging transportation to collect data is typically a task that the coordinator must handle.

Some studies indicate that the project coordinator spend a minimum of four hours a week conducting logistical and administrative duties, allowing for at least a 2:1 ratio of preparation time to contact time. The coordinator has to be prepared to do what is necessary and take on multiple roles – advisor, trouble shooter, research assistant, mediator, co-learner, and mentor – given the immediate priorities of the project. They need to pay attention to the dynamics of the group, being mindful of what transpires during the meetings as well as when the youth are out in the community. There will always be periods of time when youth and adults struggle, lack attention or appear not to be fully engaged. It is up to the project coordinator to determine whether this is a structural, group, or individual issue, and then facilitate processing through reflection and discussion.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Quality Y-AP/E demands “behind the scenes” logistic and administrative support. Ensuring that someone is ready to provide this ongoing support is critical to the success of the project.

LEVERAGE POINT #2: Create Ongoing Opportunities for Collective Reflection

There is probably nothing more critical than providing youth and adults with ongoing opportunities to engage in collective deliberation and reflection. These opportunities can be formal (e.g., workshop) or informal (weekly check-ins). Research indicates that collective reflection is important because it provides:

■ Participants with time to bond and become cohesive in their mission.

■ A means to ensure that participants learn and discuss data collection and analysis strategies.

■ A forum for raising critical consciousness about organizational and community issues.

■ A forum for problem solving and keeping everyone “on the same page.” What are the criteria for collective reflection in workshops and check-ins? Available research indicates that it must be challenging to the participants, experiential in nature, and designed to promote evaluation and interpersonal skills among Y-AP/E team members.

■ Collective reflection prepares Y-AP/E participants to successfully perform basic research tasks (conducting interviews, administering surveys, analyzing data). Skill-oriented sessions rely on role play and practice to prepare the evaluators. For example, providing instruction on interviewing techniques and the use of voice recorders is necessary. But it is through role-playing, with collective reflection, that youth (and adults) will start to acquire the requisite skill and experience. Similarly, if photography is to be used as an evaluation tool, participants need to become familiar with the equipment. But it may be more important that the team members receive training on how to interpret the resulting images.

■ Interpersonal skills need to be taught in addition to technical skills. For example, as the youth and adult team members begin to collect data and then work to collectively analyze them, they will need to hone their communication skills. Learning to actively listen (e.g., to their fellow team members; to the individuals whom they interview), to appreciate others’ perspectives and ideas, and build consensus are not skills that come naturally to most people. The importance of these skills should be returned to frequently.

■ Most youth and adults engaged in Y-AP/E have not fully considered ethical issues associated with research. For this reason, training and reflection should emphasize confidentiality and the protection of human subjects. Given the nature of evaluation, it is likely that the Y-AP/E team will know some of the people they are interviewing or observing. Participants need to understand the rationale for human protections and learn that what they see, hear and learn in the research must remain confidential. This also holds true with photography. Y-AP/E team members must learn not only how to frame a photo, but also how to shoot images in an ethical manner.

THE BOTTOM LINE: The use of ongoing collective reflection – formal and informal – may be the most significant factor in distinguishing successful and unsuccessful Y-AP/E initiatives.

LEVERAGE POINT #3:
Affirmatively
Address Issues of
Role and Power

Almost every article and report that we reviewed spoke to the importance of role and power in Y-AP/E initiatives. Whenever adults and youth work together as partners, issues of power and role will emerge. The research literature is clear that being aware of role/power dynamics is essential; addressing them in a proactive manner will greatly contribute to a successful Y-AP/E project. Those Y-AP/E initiatives that avoid confronting the issues of role and power, and make believe they don't exist, are at the greatest risk for failure.

Y-AP/E, by its nature, makes explicit, issues that are not often discussed in organizations. There will always be asymmetrical power between youth and adults in part because adults have fiduciary and fiscal responsibility for the group. At the same time, Y-AP/E, by definition, is implemented to challenge prevailing notions of youth and adult roles. Consequently adult staff must find the proper balance between treating youth as full partners, while also being guides and mentors.

The literature includes many strategies which have been effective in addressing issues of power. Most often, these occur during formal trainings with ongoing "check ins" throughout the project. Many Y-AP/E initiatives bring in outside facilitators to explore issues. Quite often, these "talk" strategies are complemented by site visits in the community and interactions with community leaders and residents. Ultimately, most Y-AP/E initiatives seek to emphasize that youth and adult staff, as separate classes of people, typically come to a project with differing obligations, interests, and skill sets. These differences can be viewed as strengths, not liabilities. Successful Y-AP/E projects build from the differences, allowing all participants to engage in the work consistent with their own interests and skill sets.

Most youth come to Y-AP/E wanting "equal power" and "equal rights." Collective discussion about power and the assignment of responsibilities typically alleviates these concerns. This is because youth are rarely asked to discuss these issues in settings of partnership with adults. They almost always respond well. As youth begin to perceive that their voice and competency are respected by adults, and as they gain a feeling of community and importance within the organization, their commitment to the project is enhanced. Concerns about power receive toward the background.

Responding to Power outside the Y-AP/E Group

Affirmatively responding to power and role imbalances within the Y-AP/E group is a priority. At the same time, issues of power within the sponsoring organization cannot be ignored. It is often the case, for example, that the youth workers initially supporting the Y-AP/E may not have significant institutional power within their own organizations. Similarly, in a school environment, constraints placed upon teachers must be acknowledged.

Too often, adults with institutional power are able to consume the project, shut it down, or frame it as an adorable performance of "student voice." The lesson is clear the Y-AP/E team first needs to identify who has institutional and other types of influential power in the larger organization, and then, get them on board with the project. Creating new project "champions" grants legitimacy to Y-AP/E and offers an institutional buffer when conflicts arise. Gaining this support often simply requires persistence. Having youth speak to "adults with power" early in the process helps the adults see that the research effort is one of serious purpose and method. Ongoing communication with the power brokers is an effective strategy for strengthening their commitment.

Some projects have addressed issues of power by using organizational self assessments to create an awareness and favorable context for Y-AP/E. That is, before initiating a Y-AP/E project, the youth/adult teams work with organizational staff to conduct a self-assessment to explore how “ready” the organization is for seriously taking on this effort. Making the link between organizational assessment and Y-AP/E can create a solid foundation for the subsequent work. It also serves to inform organizational leaders about Y-AP/E. As these stakeholders discuss Y-AP/E, perhaps in a focus group or brainstorming session, they start to learn more and gain enthusiasm for these efforts.

It is also important for youth to understand that evaluation can be a powerful tool, and evaluators can have influential roles within the community. Therefore, we suggest that Y-AP/E participants spend time examining existing power structures and the cycle of social and community change. As the Y-AP/E team begins to understand the “stakes of change,” realizing that change often comes at a high price, the consciousness of members is raised. They begin to understand that their work might jeopardize funding for some programs or projects while promoting funding for others. They begin to understand that evaluation can bring people together or isolate them. Research further indicates that such consciousness raising can strengthen the Y-AP/E team. It helps them collect their data with sensitivity, interpret their data, and equally important, provides necessary context and insight for their conclusions and recommendations.

THE BOTTOM LINE: It is necessary to unpack the role of power and privilege within the Y-AP/E group, the sponsoring organization, and the larger community. Taking the time to address issues of power and role will strengthen the entire Y-AP/E process: from collecting the data and analyzing the results, to ultimately using the findings to make recommendations.

KEY LITERATURE FOR TIP SHEET 4:

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Maximize the Relevance and Utilization of Evaluation

Y-AP/E has a clear bottom line:

to make stakeholders aware of a particular problem and/or to bring information to those who can use it to strengthen policies and programs. It is that simple. As we reviewed the literature, we found that *the most successful project managers were those who used this bottom line as a touchstone from the very beginning of a Y-AP/E project to its completion.*

The striving for relevance and utilization of the evaluation drove all decision making. Toward that end, managers focused on choosing the correct research questions (Leverage Point #1), maximizing the diversity of youth researchers and community voices (Leverage Point #2), carefully selecting research methods (Leverage Point #3), and preparing and strategically sharing results and recommendations (Leverage Point #4).

LEVERAGE POINT #1: **Choose the Correct Research Questions**

This might sound obvious, but it is more difficult than it appears. Taking the time to choose the “best” questions for the evaluation is time well spent. Good questions ground all efforts of the Y-AP/E team. They focus the initiative, and ensure that the information gathered is relevant to the stakeholders who will ultimately use it. It is important, therefore, not to rush through this task.

Issue Identification

It is essential that the youth feel that the issue to be evaluated – be it school reform, racism, or the beautification of a local park – is important to their day to day lives. This can be frustrating for adults who have a worthy agenda, but have not taken the time to see whether youth share their concerns. Youth voices count as much as adult voices when it comes to issue identification. For it is only when youth are committed to the issue that the Y-AP/E project will flourish.

When young people fully understand the realities of the issue they are studying, they are better prepared for successful participation in a Y-AP/E project. A primary role for adults is to help youth gain their own understanding of this larger context. This might include, for example, discussion about existing power structures and the cycle of social/institutional change. Young people must understand that change is always controversial, that there are often winners and losers, and unexpected consequences.

One of the most effective strategies is to have the Y-AP/E team conduct observations and interviews with key stakeholders prior to establishing the evaluation questions. When youth get to hear about the importance of the issue from different vantage points, their commitment to the project quickly accelerates.

Research Questions

The process of generating research questions begins after the larger issue has been identified. At that point, youth and adults participate in brainstorming activities to generate a list of possible research questions. Slowly, the team builds consensus around specific questions. These questions are emphasized and highlighted every time the Y-AP/E group gets together. The questions ground the process. The questions will change somewhat over time, of course, but it is best not to radically change them after the data collection begins.

THE ADULT ROLE IS DIRECT: Keep it manageable! Evaluations can focus on only three or four questions at a time. There will always be pressure to make the study “really big.” Actually, the evaluation will be far more relevant and its findings are more likely to be used if it has a clearly defined focus.

LEVERAGE POINT #2: **Maximize the Diversity of Youth Researchers and Community Voices**

Evaluations are most relevant and utilized when a diverse array of stakeholders participate in the process. Successful project managers, therefore, insist on effective outreach. Outreach focuses on the recruitment of youth to the Y-AP/E team. It also focuses on involving and interviewing a range of organizational and community stakeholders during the evaluation. Such strategies will ensure that the evaluation findings will fully respect the diverse voices of people who are impacted by the findings.

Selecting and Retaining Youth

Before recruiting young people for the Y-AP/E project, it is important to identify who you wish to have on the team. Research indicates that personal interest is the most important criteria when selecting youth for the Y-AP/E project. Youth have to be excited about the goals or intrigued by purposes of the project. Diversity is the next criteria. Having a diverse team brings a wealth of perspective and experience to the issue under study. It is especially useful to select youth of differing ages. This diversity allows for peer mentoring. It ensures that “experienced” youth are still available when other youth graduate or stop participating.

Other criteria identified by research include: (1) the willingness to work in teams, the ability to listen and show respect to others, and a commitment to confidentiality; (2) the particular knowledge or skill set that is needed for the project, be it prior experience in doing research, conducting interviews, or using a camera; and (3) contacts, networks, or an insider perspective to the community or issue under study.

When recruitment is done well, issues of retention are also addressed at the same time. Youth who have an interest in the project and have competencies consistent with project needs are most likely to be a good match over the longer term. These are the youth who will sustain their participation. Other core strategies for retaining youth include:

Have good functional technology: Some projects find that having the “right” equipment is crucial. When the technology doesn’t work youth will be frustrated or lose interest.

Work with youths’ schedules: Facilitators always have to be cognizant that youth have other academic, extracurricular, and employment obligations. Attempts should be made to help youth work around their busy schedules. Youth will not attend all meetings. There need to be ways to keep youth up to speed and to communicate assignments.

Use active learning: Youth want to be doing things. If project meetings are not interspersed, for example, with opportunities to role play, discuss controversial events, or have a snack, youth will lose enthusiasm and momentum.

Reflect on the process and results: Throughout the project, youth must have multiple opportunities to obtain feedback on their research process and their data. Ongoing reflection with key stakeholders outside of the project reinforces the fact that the project is connected to something larger than themselves and is important to a larger community. Although time-consuming, these experiences are highly valued by young people.

Compensation: If possible, provide payment for those youth who participate fully.

Hearing from Diverse Community Stakeholders

It is most critical that the Y-AP/E team hear from the community or organizational members – both adults and youth – who are most directly influenced by the issue under study. There are three core outreach strategies:

■ Maximizing community voices happens first during data collection. The aim is to interview and/or survey those persons who have the most to gain or lose from your research. It is important to gain perspective, knowledge, and insight from these individuals. This strategy will ensure that the Y-AP/E team garners perspective from those who have the knowledge and a stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

■ After the analysis is concluded, some evaluators will conduct “informant checks.” In other words, they will send the findings of the research to representatives of those groups most affected by the evaluation and ask for comment. These “checks” can also be done in person.

■ In the same fashion, Y-AP/E teams often ask for comments during public presentations of the study. When planning these presentations, the Y-AP/E teams strive to reach out and invite all segments of the community so that members will have the chance to provide their feedback and perspective.

THE BOTTOM LINE: It is important to stress that nobody – youth or adult – will be able to participate in all aspects of the Y-AP/E project. One should plan for this reality by having multiple persons take on key aspects of the project, thus sharing responsibility. Further, it is important that participants choose and commit to certain responsibilities. When youth and adults are able to participate in ways consistent with their interests and availability, they are most likely to make substantial contributions to the project.

LEVERAGE POINT #3: Careful Selection of Methods

Too many Y-AP/E initiatives become overwhelmed by vast amounts of data and by an inability to analyze them. Successful project managers know how to find a balance. They strive to collect only data of the highest “priority.” They use methods – be it interview, survey, photovoice – that fit with stakeholders’ experience. Similarly, successful project managers choose data analysis strategies that are valid for the purposes of the evaluation, but at the same time, they are mindful that participants will lose interest if the analysis takes too long.

Data Collection.

The purpose of data collection is to gather information that will help “answer” the research questions. In choosing methods, it is useful to consider the following: (1) It is important to use research methods that can be learned by persons (youth and adults) who have not previously conducted research. There is no need to be overly complicated. (2) Some methods appeal to and energize youth, and these should be used when possible. Giving youth (and adults) some options in terms of methods will facilitate excitement about participation. (3) Research information is time sensitive. It is best to choose methods that can be collected and analyzed rather quickly.

Y-AP/E teams typically use one or more of the following methods. Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses, so it is important to consider which method will best fit the research questions and time availability of the Y-AP/E team.

Review of Existing Documents and Studies

Most issues have been studied previously. Y-AP/E teams can benefit from the insight of others. Discussing existing information allows the team to create a shared foundation. It allows the team to “not recreate the wheel” by collecting data that some other group has already collected. Such reviews allow Y-AP/E team members to learn about and get excited about the issue.

Observations

Going into the field and making observations is also energizing to youth. When youth go into the field – be it a community or organizational setting – to observe the phenomenon or issues under study, they gain an experiential and emotional knowledge that cannot be achieved elsewhere. Youth can document their observations through photography or field notes.

Personal Interviews

Interviews provide a means for understanding an issue in great depth. Interviews allow the community stakeholders to speak in their own voices without the filter of a survey or even an observation. It allows the stakeholders to discuss what they would like to see in the future. It is extremely important to accurately record information gathered during the interview to ensure that the individual’s views are not misrepresented. Either use a tape recorder, or have a note taker to assist with this process

The Community Survey

Surveys are useful for understanding the “big picture” of how different stakeholder groups understand a given issue. Community surveys allow the youth-adult research team to assess the extent to which the stakeholders endorse different options and proposals. The trick is to keep the survey short and focused on priority issues. It is also useful to “pilot test” the survey to make sure that people understand the questions in the way that you intend.

Data collection is an ideal time for youth to take on significant responsibilities. A primary role for adults is to help prepare youth. Before conducting interviews, for example, it is important for youth to engage in role playing in order to practice their skills. Early on, it is useful for adults to be co-interviewers, and to provide young people with constructive feedback. Similarly, it is ideal for adults and youth to conduct observations collaboratively. In that way they can reflect on what they observed, learn how to document observations, and finally, relate the observations to the research questions.

There are numerous data analysis strategies found in the literature which are listed in the section titled “Practical and Engaging Data Analysis Strategies.” Review the list to see what works best with your Y-AP/E project: categorizing, charting, or building a collage map or a diagram. Perhaps your data are best-suited to a data dialogue posting, or creating poetry or a story board by individuals or the group. Maybe after reviewing the list of data analysis strategies you will choose to collect data using a process called photovoice and create a display for the wider community to reflect upon.

LEVERAGE POINT #4: **Strategically** **Share Results and** **Recommendations**

Information alone is not sufficient to produce a shift in power relations, program or policy. It is organized information in the hands of organized people that creates change. It is for this reason that the most effective Y-AP/E groups start thinking about dissemination well before the study is completed.

■ In many cases, the Y-AP/E team is presenting to stakeholders within their own organization (such as their school or community center). The aim is to present to the top leaders (such as the executive director, board of directors, or principal). Y-AP/E teams have found it useful to create the expectation, and set a deadline, for the leaders to respond to the organization. And at the same time it is necessary to reach out to other stakeholders. Y-AP/E teams engage staff, teachers, and young people in regularly scheduled listening and learning sessions. In this way, both top down and bottom up strategies are used.

■ In many other cases, the Y-AP team has studied broader issues that cross-cut many parts of the larger community. To disseminate study recommendations, the Y-AP/E team typically organizes community forums and presentations to community coalitions to reach core stakeholder groups and those with the institutional power. During the forums, the Y-AP/E team creates the expectation that the recommendations be addressed. Plans can be met for follow-up meetings, with the aim being to enhance accountability among community leaders.

One or two forums, even with strong follow up, are not always sufficient to spark change. It is for this reason that the most effective Y-AP/E teams reach out to allies during the dissemination phase of the project. Allies can be other youth groups, organizations, or associations that are willing to publicize and advocate for the study findings and recommendations. As the coalition grows around the study findings, the potential for utilization grows accordingly.

Crafting Recommendations

As the study draws to a close, the Y-AP/E team must take on the critical step of preparing recommendations. Specifically, the Y-AP/E team must decide what information they are going to present to the community, and specifically to whom in the community. Asking and answering three sets of questions will prepare the Y-AP/E team for this important task.

- ① What are the “most positive” study findings? What are the “most negative” or “controversial” findings from the study?
- ② Which of these findings can be used to solve issues, as opposed to laying blame? How can the findings be framed so that they have the greatest likelihood of sparking action?
- ③ Who does the Y-AP/E team think should hear about the study findings? What are the best strategies for reaching and communicating to these people?

Once the Y-AP/E team has decided which findings and conclusions to present to the public, they can begin to craft recommendations. This can be a difficult, yet highly engaging process. Structured activities – those that are both fun and content-oriented – are ideal for helping youth and adults create study recommendations.

One practical strategy for preparing recommendations is to break the Y-AP/E team into small groups, and then to ask each group to complete sentences such as the following: (1) Our findings and conclusions indicate that the [community

organization, local leaders, school board] should... “or (2) When considering future policy and program improvements, the [community organization, local leaders, school board] should...”

As the different groups report out, perhaps by writing their answers on newsprint that’s posted on a wall, the participants discover patterns and commonalities. These themes become the focus for determining the final recommendations of the group.

Youth as Presenters

Youth can be highly influential presenters and advocates for the Y-AP/E findings and recommendations. It is critical to remember, however, that most youth – even the most verbal – are inexperienced at presenting research findings to the public. Adults have to take the lead in preparing young people for this important responsibility.

■ Role playing is a proven way of improving public speaking skills.

■ Inexperienced public speakers may also benefit from having a more experienced adult partner help answer questions from the audience, keep the discussion on track, and keep an eye on the clock.

■ Presenting results as a team also provides a good structure, allowing multiple persons to present different aspects of the work. When youth-adult partnerships are modeled effectively, additional champions for the issue are likely to volunteer their expertise and influence to the cause.

KEY LITERATURE FOR TIP SHEET 5:

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practical and engaging data analysis strategies

Collecting data – regardless of which method is used – can be a very time consuming and demanding process. After you have completed your data gathering, then what? How do you go about making sense of all the information that you have collected? How do you synthesize it and report what you have learned to others? Analyzing data can be a creative, engaging and fun process. Listed below are a number of different “user friendly” data analysis strategies. Each is briefly described along with the literature citation which more fully illustrates the practice. See the annotated bibliography for reference information for each author.

CATEGORIZING:

After taking photographs of their community (see Photovoice) the youth used the photographs to identify community assets and community deficits. Assets were then further divided into people or places and deficits defined as either things that the youth could, or not, do something about or things they could not. Then they attempted to match which community assets could be used to correct or improve the deficit side of the equation.

Mead, 2003

CHARTING:

A simple matrix of concepts are listed, (in Hart the benefits of different settings in children’s lives are listed) and using a marker or sticker children “vote.” In some cases multi-voting is appropriate. Multi-voting works by allowing each person a certain number of markers (perhaps five). They may choose to place all their marks on one option or distribute them across several choices. A chart could also be used for tallying responses from other interviews conducted outside of the group. It allows for a good visual aid. In the case described in Hart, youth of all

ages understood the method and they were highly engaged in small group discussion while completing the task.
Hart, 2003 (p. 68-69)

COLLAGE:

Working in small groups at Girls Inc. the girls built symbolic collages to represent the organization. In the same small groups the girls were able to further identify what was most important to them from the collages and come up with research questions. When they returned as a large group, all the questions were read and together they agreed on two questions.

Chen, 2010

DATA DIALOGUE, FLIP CHARTS AND GRAFFITI WALLS:

Conduct a data dialogue by posting findings on the walls and allowing participants to respond to the posted comments or information. At a conference of youth and adults, participants finished a variety of sentences such as, “Our most successful activity has been...” with youth using one color and adults another. The responses were written on flip charts which were posted around the room(s), like graffiti, to give participants an easy

way to view responses on a variety of topics. Using two colors for responses allowed equal time / space for both youth and adults, but an ability to differentiate which comments came from which group.

Voakes, 2003 (p. 28) and Powers and Tiffany, 2006

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS:

Responses to interview questions were posted on the wall and girls read across the responses. Next they identified key themes and patterns and lastly tallied results, calculated percentages and selected quotes.

The guiding questions for this analysis were:

- 1 What were the top three responses?
- 2 What percentage of girls gave these responses?
- 3 What quotation represents their response?

It was felt that small groups with concrete steps eased the process from abstract to the advanced.

Chen, 2010

LISTENING TO THE EXPERTS:

Bragging Booths were created by the youth delegates from each center to demonstrate their best practices through a variety of media. Workshops were hosted by youth who also secured evaluation comments from participants and the Modified Social Stress Model, MSSM, was used to evaluate how a given activity, program or policy will affect youth. *Voakes, 2003*

MAP MAKING / SOCIAL MAPPING / ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGRAMS:

Map making:

In the situation described by Hart, children were asked to make a geographic map to represent where members lived and homes where people lived who were not members. They first used yarn and cardboard (movable objects) and completed the map using pencils or crayons. This method was time consuming so they later moved to social mapping.

Social mapping:

In this process a series of circles is drawn to identify distance rather than actual geographic location, each circle representing the same distance from the club. (In this case each circle was an additional 5 miles.) Youth then identified how far they lived from the club and in some cases their relationship to neighbors. This method could be used when recording a variety of aspects of a community being studied.

Organizational diagrams:

Cards of different colors were used to identify age of gender and then placed in groups by activities. The resulting diagram showed what age and gender members engaged in similar activities.

Hart, 2003 (described above), also in *Suleiman, 2006*, drawings of where students lived, a time table of activities, a social network diagram and child-led walking tours to create an exhibition to define priorities for action. *Wilson, 2007*, made a map of the school environment using contrasting attributes as a way to discuss assets and issues at the school.

MESSAGING GAMES:

Four different games were used to teach data analysis, to find similarities across the data and transform the data into action:

- 1 The Candy Sorting Game. Using a wide variety of candy, groups first sorted by type (first-order analysis); then reorganized the piles into fewer groups such as brands (second-order analysis); and then provided names (theming).
- 2 The Message Scavenger Hunt. Using their PhotoVoice data (photos and narratives) groups identified messages and highlighted them. To cluster the messages, a “scavenger hunt” was conducted where each participant would find themes that they felt matched and present their match to a facilitator. If the facilitator was convinced, the match was posted on a message wall.
- 3 Memory Matching Game. This was another clustering game where the

backs of the messages were numbered. Teams called out numbers they thought were “matched” in theme. As before they had to convince the facilitators of the match.

- 4 Simon the City Council Member Says Game. After identifying the messages this role play game was used to assist the participants with summarizing and condensing large portions of data into recommendations. Using six stems (youth could, youth should, adults could, adults should, local organizations could, local organizations should) recommendations were written and organized and then shared at the mock council meeting.

Foster-Fishman, 2010

PHOTOGRAPHY (PHOTOVOICE):

Problem identification and initial feedback from youth in a small Midwestern city was gleaned using photography through a process coined as Photovoice. The first two weeks students focused their photographic efforts around two framing questions about their future; the next two weeks the role of friends and community were the subject of their photographs.

Next, youth selected three photos to share and using a free writing process answered three reflective questions such as, “What is important for people to understand about this photo?” Using a facilitator the group expanded on the photographer’s reflection and the discussion allowed for deeper reflection and promoted a critical analysis of community conditions in the photograph.

The youth developed five overarching issues through group dialogue

around the photos and were able to articulate each one with narrative content and an example photo or two.

The photographs were then used for a community exhibit to promote knowledge and sharing among other community residents and eventually they created a book around the Photovoice project.

Foster-Fishman, 2010 (example above) other examples in: *Cammarota, 2009; Mead, 2003; Strack, 2004* (includes a recommended curriculum for Photovoice) *Wang, 2006* (created method and first used it in mid-1990's); *Wilson, 2007; Foster-Fishman, 2005* (this article also evaluates the impacts of participating in PhotoVoice on participants).

POETRY:

In the Social Justice Education Project youth made observations and created field notes. Next they reflected on their notes and created poetry to report on their documentation about an experience within a social context they had observed. Poetry was also used to generate themes. *Cammarota, 2009 (p. 59)*

SHOWeD:

When selecting images for building context or story telling each participant selects one or two that he or she feels is most significant and then uses these questions to frame the story:

S: What do you See here?

H: What's really Happening here?

O: How does this relate to Our lives?

W: Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist?

eD: What can we Do about it?

Typically this is used with Photovoice, but could also be used when examining other data.

Strack, 2004 and Wang, 2006

SKITS:

In order to brainstorm ideas for a matrix of activities the youth were asked to perform three skits of their favorite activities: one of an activity they did in the club, one an activity outside the club and finally an activity they wished they could do in the club. Coming up with the skits was an effective way to engage everyone and they served to liberate ideas. However, young children occasionally used this as an opportunity to perform something they wanted to perform rather than a favorite activity and it was a very time-consuming method.

Hart, 2003 (p. 71)

STORYBOARD:

In an effort to help youth answer the question, "How does this affect our lives?" story boarding was used to introduce the idea of causality. The story board allowed youth to see a photograph as a moment in a story or sequence. To do this, students created a storyboard consisting of simple drawings and captions to describe the following:

① their picture

② what they thought or felt about it

③ what might have happened right before

④ why it happened

⑤ what would happen next

⑥ what they hoped would happen in the future.

Wilson, 2007 (p. 246)

VENN DIAGRAM:

To collectively identify all of the people and organizations that had an influence on the organization being studied, the youth were given pieces of cards of different size, color and shape to arrange around the name of the organization. The size of the card related to the amount of influence someone else had and the color and shape identified the type of organization or whether it was a person or organization. If it was a direct influence the card would touch the organization card and if it was an indirect influence the card would be placed a distance away. Depending on the age of those participating more or less variables could be incorporated.

Hart, 2003 (p.73)

the short list: recommended reading for field practitioners

Brown, Kelli R. McCormack;
McDermott, Robert J.; Bryant,
Carol A.; Forthofer, Melinda S.

Youth as Community Researchers

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ This very brief article pointedly outlines the benefits of youth involvement in research, the challenges of youth as researchers, and concludes with lessons learned during the Sarasota County Demonstration Project. The goal of the project was to reduce tobacco and alcohol initiation among middle school students in the county. The Community Advisory Committee wanted the youth to have an active role; however, one challenge they encountered was working with adults reluctant to relinquish control. Other challenges related to working with youth, such as the logistical issue of transportation for youth and students' availability, are described as well as things that worked well, including role playing, training on confidentiality, and paying researchers for their time while training and interviewing. Clear implementation lessons from this project included: have an enthusiastic coordinator, involve youth from the beginning and train them on research skills.

Chen, PeiYao; Weiss, Faedra;
Nicholson, Heather Johnston; Girls
Incorporated®

Girls Study Girls Inc.: Engaging Girls in Evaluation Through Participatory Action Research

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010) 46:228-237

■ This is an excellent article that provides insight into several challenges as Girls Incorporated® conducted research across five affiliates to discover the meaning and impact of Girls Inc. environments. The article clearly outlines their steps in training, data collection, and data analysis and presenting results, with an emphasis on girl and adult roles. The paper also enumerates lessons learned in the areas of: using technology to attract participants, managing the differing abilities of participants, training before getting started, collecting a realistic amount of data, supporting the team efforts through behind-the-scenes staff, and having organizational leadership for engaging stakeholders.

Foster-Fishman, Pennie; Law,
Kristen M.; Lichty, Lauren F.; Aoun,
Christina

Youth ReACT for Social Change: A Method for Youth Participatory Action Research

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010) 46:67-83

■ This relatively long article provides detailed descriptions of the methods used to engage youth in problem identification and qualitative data analysis with particular attention to

research stages throughout the project. This article provides an excellent example of using Photovoice for problem identification and messaging games for learning to do first and second order analysis and theming. The article concludes with an analysis of the challenges: data reduction, time constraints, maintaining youth involvement, and managing group dynamics. Feedback and community dialogue culminated in a booklet "A Guide to Youth Voices" and a traveling exhibit.

James, Taj

Democratizing Knowledge: The Role of Research and Evaluation in Youth Organizing

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ This article is primarily about youth-empowerment and outlines the steps for knowledge production: gathering information, analyzing, interpreting and framing the data and then linking the information to power and putting it to use. In the author's own words it, "examines the relationship between knowledge and power and provides examples of knowledge production in the context of real-life campaigns where youth are using information as a tool for social change."

Kohfeldt, Danielle; Chun, Lina;
Grace; Sara; Languout;
Regina Day

Youth Empowerment in Context: Exploring Tensions in School-Based yPAR

*American Journal of Community
Psychology (2011) 47:28-45*

■ This is an excellent article for anyone working in a school setting attempting to make changes through youth empowerment. The researchers learned about hierarchies in schools and their experience illustrated that the project is not made up of only the “researchers” and the “participants,” but other stakeholders such as teachers, parents, principals, etc. For example they learned how some teachers had more influence than other teachers and far more than the students. The research identified three areas of tension: assumptions about youth’s ability to have a say in school rules, structural challenges including the invisible structure of power within the setting, and conflict over what kind of goals the project should have (winnable goals versus critical consciousness).

Kirshner, Ben; O’Donoghue, Jennifer; McLaughlin, Milbrey

Youth-Adult Research Collaborations: Bringing Youth Voice to the Research Process

*Chapter 7 of “Organized Activities
as Contexts of Development: Extra-
curricular Activities, After-School
and Community Programs” by J.
Mahoney, R. Larson and J. Eddies
(eds.)*

■ This chapter describes a frame-
work for understanding youth-adult

research partnerships and that frame-
work is used to examine two research
projects. The author’s framework
lists six dimensions that are dis-
cussed across the different method-
ologies, beginning with the question,
“What will the interaction between
youth and adults look like?” Included
in the chapter are the two examples
of Youth Adult Research Collabora-
tion that are examined. Using the six
dimension the authors characterize
one strategy as “youth as research
assistants” and the other strategy as
“youth as research partners.” The
chapter concludes with a discussion
of the benefits, challenges and impli-
cations of youth-adult research col-
laboration.

London, Jonathan K.;
Zimmerman, Kristen;
Erbstein, Nancy

Youth-Led Research and Evaluation: Tools for Youth, Organizational, and Community Development

*New Directions for Evaluation, no.
98, Summer 2003*

■ This chapter provides case studies
and discussion about the ways that
youth-led research and evaluation
can help link youth and community
development goals and outcomes.
Youth REP (Research, Evaluation
and Planning) includes “strategies to
put the youth ‘voice’ into the commu-
nity ear and ultimately into action.”
The chapter provides a table of Youth
REP benefits to youth, organizations
and communities that could be of
value to someone trying to initiate
a project and convince stakeholders
of the value of youth involvement.
Included are sample projects whose

outcomes demonstrate the benefits;
however, their methodology is not
described. Youth IMPACT, a program
of the San Francisco Dept. of Chil-
dren Youth and Families studying 40
community-based organizations, had
findings that were distinctly different
from adult-led processes. For exam-
ple, youth found that “trust” was an
indicator of a successful youth-serv-
ing organization and yet the idea had
never been considered previously.

Mead, June P.

Map It! And Turn Up the Volume of Youth Voices

*Community Youth Development
Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003*

■ This article describes the unique
approach of using photography to
identify community assets and com-
munity deficits in Buffalo, NY, through
youth taking pictures of what’s work-
ing and what’s not working, or needs
fixing or improvement. The two lists
were further broken down. Assets
were listed as people or places and de-
ficits defined as things that the youth
could do something about and things
they could not. From this process two
major projects evolved: a riverfront
park clean-up and improvements
to the playground. Although adult
facilitators planned the photo map-
ping project, the youth made many
gains. Overall they gained a sense of
empowerment. Their motivation to
succeed was increased as was their
self-confidence. They developed skills
in leadership, problem-solving, plan-
ning and decision making. The article
closes with suggestions for adopting
the community mapping process.

Ozer, Emily J; Ritterman, Miranda; Wanis, Maggie G

Participatory Action Research (PAR) in Middle School: Opportunities, Constraints, and Key Processes

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010) 46:152-166

■ In this very detailed article the researchers describe their experience using Participatory Action Research in a Middle School setting, making it another good resource for those working in a school environment. The intended outcome was to provide disadvantaged students an opportunity to participate in school governance and shape school practices based on their research. After a range of issues were identified the teachers and researchers helped narrow the issues, ultimately choosing two issues they felt were most “winnable.” The article spends considerable time discussing the features of the school setting that affected their research. In this setting they found numerous constraints: climate and culture (schools tend to be adult-driven and behavior focused), policy and structure (academic calendar and competing demands), school social network (necessary to have teachers interested and able to collaborate on the issues), space for non-academic activities (very few electives are provided in middle school which is where this work was conducted), student development (issues of social maturity in students and inadequate physical space) and teacher development (the need to share power with students and have ongoing technical support regarding research and advocacy).

Strack, Robert W.; Magil, Cathleen; McDonagh, Kara

Engaging Youth Through Photovoice

Health Promotion Practice, January 2004, No. 1, 49-58

■ This article focuses on one photovoice project in Baltimore; however, it clearly outlines the method from site selection and equipment to exhibiting the project. The authors provide recommendations including a curriculum outline. Other specific recommendations include: selecting the right site with support for the project, a youth to adult ratio of 5:1, and having at least 20 weeks to conduct the project. The paper concludes with measures to be taken to ensure youth empowerment through photovoice. Included here is a discussion of the role of power and the recommendation that adults involved (with power) must find the appropriate places for youth to express themselves to influential adults.

Zimmerman, Kristen; and London, Jonathan

Getting to Go: Building Organizational Capacity to Engage in Youth-led Research, Evaluation, and Planning

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ This article provides an overview of Youth in Focus. Youth in Focus helps organizations to develop capacity to integrate youth-led research, evaluation and planning into their programs, organizations and community initiatives. Highlighted in the article is a group they worked with, Youth

IMPACT (described in more detail by London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein in Youth-Led Research and Evaluation: Tools for Youth, Organizational, and Community Development, New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003). The article continues with a list of obstacles and questions to ask before taking on participatory research with youth.

annotated literature review: essential articles and reports for researchers

Over forty articles and book chapters were used to create the Y-AP/E Resource Guide. Below are descriptions of each. Also at the end of each tip sheet are recommendations for which articles to refer to for a given section. At the end of this literature review are two lists: Literature that involves research in a school setting and Literature that sites the benefits of youth involvement.

If you are looking for a few good comprehensive articles on the topic of Y-AP/E return to the Short List: Recommended Reading for Field Practitioners.

Anyon, Yolanda and Naughton, Sandra
Youth Empowerment: the Contributions and Challenges of Youth-Led research in a High-Poverty, Urban Community

JGC Issue Brief: Youth Empowerment, February, 2003

■ For anyone considering working with youth in a high-poverty setting this article is a must-read. (Note that the authors determined that you cannot simply move a program from a low-income setting to a high-poverty neighborhood.) The concise article clearly describes the unique challenges to program effectiveness and stability in a high-poverty setting: community instability, lack of academic engagement, violence, need for money and competing responsibilities. However, the article also identifies the critical benefits to youth who do participate: focused attention of adults, opportunities to travel, learning skills such as report writing, and working in teams, data analysis and public speaking; as well as outlines what worked in this unique setting.

Arnold, Mary
Recommended Curriculum:

Participatory Evaluation with Youth: Building Skills for Community Action.

University of Oregon Extension., 2009

■ http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/about/pod-yig/partic_eval09.pdf

Brown, Kelli R. McCormack; McDermott, Robert J.; Bryant, Carol A.; Forthofer, Melinda S.

Youth as Community Researchers

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Camino, Linda

Pitfalls and Promising Practices of Youth-Adult Partnerships: An Evaluator's Reflections

Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2005

■ This article discusses three pitfalls that can undermine the effectiveness of youth-adult partnerships: (1) the assumption that youth should do everything of importance; (2) the belief that adults should "get out of the

way” and give up power; and (3) the focus on youth as the marked category. Camino advocates for reflection in meetings, articulating the importance of working collaboratively and recommends a third party can help the group explore their shared values.

Camino, Linda, Zeldin, Shep, Mook, Carrie and Cailin O’Connor

Recommended Curriculum:

Youth and Adult Leaders for Program Improvement: A practical guide for program assessment and action planning, 2004.

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthadultpartnership/yalpe-work-book/>

Cammarota, Julio and Romero, Augustine F.
A Social Justice Epistemology and Pedagogy for Latina/o Students: Transforming Public Education with Participatory Action Research

New Directions for Youth Development, No 123 Fall 2009

■ This article outlines the process used by the Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) in Tucson, AZ, to create a curriculum that provided students with social science requirements for their junior and senior years of high school based on their research findings. The students were able to see the plight of those in the community, not just themselves or those in the group, to develop social justice themes for the class. They used unique ways to analyze their data – poems, notes, photos and interviews.

Chawla, Louise and Driskell, David
The Growing up in Cities Project: Global Perspectives on Children and Youth as Catalysts for Community Change

Youth Participation and Community Change, 2006, 183-200

■ This article documents the “Growing Up in Cities” model project in Sathyanagar, India. Numerous activities were engaged to glean the situation in the community, such as one-on-one interviews, drawings by youth, a social network diagram and walking tours. The experience there illustrated obstacles faced by young people and raised fundamental issues about NGOs; however, there were several successes including the local staff developing an appreciation and skills for participatory methods. The article concludes with the benefits of including youth in evaluation.

Checkoway, Barry; Allison, Tanene; Montoya, Colleen

Youth participation in public policy at the municipal level

Children and Youth Services review 27, 2005 1149-1162

■ This paper argues for youth to participate in public policy at the municipal level, highlighting the positive effects of participation on the social development of young people. After examining the San Francisco Youth Commission, they cite the strengthening of the youth’s knowledge, practical skills, social values and civic competencies as benefits to the youth. At the end of the article the research team lists lessons they learned from their observations.

Checkoway, Barry; Dobbie, David; Richards-Schuster, Katie

Involving Young People in Community Evaluation Research

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ This article shares findings from the 2002 symposium on youth participation held in Racine, WI, with the objective of developing specific strategies for strengthening youth participation in community research and evaluation. The symposium identified a number of issues that are addressed in the paper: purpose of youth participation, methods of involving young people, roles for youth and adults, the relationship of this activity to other fields and what institutional structures are needed to develop this work and build capacity. The article concludes with a “Declaration of Principles for Youth Participation in Community Research and Evaluation.”

Checkoway, Barry and Richards-Shuster, Katie.
Recommended Curriculum:

Participatory Evaluation with Young People

University of Michigan School of Social Work

<http://ssw.umich.edu/public/currentprojects/youthandcommunity/resourcesPublications.html>

Chen, PeiYao; Weiss, Faedra; Nicholson, Heather Johnston; Girls Incorporated®

Girls Study Girls Inc.: Engaging Girls in Evaluation Through Participatory Action Research

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010) 46:228-237

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their steps in training, data collection, and data analysis and presenting results, with an emphasis on girl and adult roles. The paper also enumerates lessons learned in the areas of: using technology to attract participants, managing the differing abilities of participants, training before getting started, collecting a realistic amount of data, supporting the team efforts through behind-the-scenes staff, and having organizational leadership for engaging stakeholders.

Fetterman, David

Youth and Evaluation: Empowered Social-Change Agents

New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003

■ This overview of the collection of articles highlights the shift from viewing youth as defective to their “potential to invigorate evaluation practice.” The volume places youth at the center of the discussion making a compelling argument for their role in evaluation.

Foster-Fishman, Pennie; Nowell, Brenda; Deacon, Zermarie; Nievar, M. Angela; McCann, Peggy

Using Methods That Matter: The Impact of Reflection, Dialogue, and Voice

American Journal Community Psychology (2005) 36:275-291

■ This paper reports on the findings from interviews of 16 youth and adults who participated in PhotoVoice, one method of participatory evaluation. This article briefly tells the methodology used for a study in the city of Battle Creek, MI (Yes we can!) where the participants followed the steps of photography and reflection to provide insight into their neighborhood. However, the focus of this article is on the impacts of participating as a photographer on the participants. After the study was done, researchers interviewed those involved and learned that overall they were significantly affected by their experiences. Benefits to the youth were numerous from empowering them as experts, to fostering reflection, to creating a context safe for exploring diverse perspectives.

Foster-Fishman, Pennie; Law, Kristen M.; Lichty, Lauren F.; Aoun, Christina

Youth ReACT for Social Change: A Method for Youth Participatory Action Research

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■ This relatively long article provides detailed descriptions of the methods used to engage youth in problem identification and qualitative data analysis with particular attention to research stages throughout the project. This

article provides an excellent example of using Photovoice for problem identification and messaging games for learning to do first and second order analysis and theming. The article concludes with an analysis of the challenges: data reduction, time constraints, maintaining youth involvement, and managing group dynamics. Feedback and community dialogue culminated in a booklet “A Guide to Youth Voices” and a traveling exhibit.

Goodyear, Leslie K.

Engaging Young People in Evaluation as a Strategy for Evaluation Field-Building and Innovation

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ In this two page article, Goodyear articulates the benefits to youth and communities of involving young people in all aspects of community research and evaluation. She especially emphasizes youth’s role in presenting findings to stakeholders.

Goodyear, Leslie K. and Checkoway, Barry

Establishing the Importance of Youth Participation in Community Evaluation and Research

Guest Editors for Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ Goodyear and Checkoway are the guest editors for this volume and in their one-page note to readers they highlight that this issue is dedicated to youth participation in community evaluation and research. Their fourth paragraph highlights numerous benefits for youth and the note concludes with encouragement to engage young people as equal, active partners.

Greene, Chad (2002)

Recommended Resource, Tip Sheet 1:

Evaluation Technical Notes

UNICEF Evaluation Office, 2002

■ http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_13486.html near bottom of page)

Hart, Roger A.; Rajbhandary, Jasmine Using Participatory Methods to Further the Democratic Goals of Children’s Organizations

New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003

■ Although fully designed by adults, this article provides interesting ways that young children can be involved in evaluating their own experiences. The goal of this particular research was to provide an account of the current mem-

bership patterns, structures and functioning of twenty-two children's clubs in Nepal. Using map making, social mapping, organizational diagrams, charting and skits as participatory group methods, researchers were able to make some useful recommendations to Save the Children. The article concludes with a brief analysis of some of the limitations of the methods and how to overcome them.

James, Taj

Democratizing Knowledge: The Role of Research and Evaluation in Youth Organizing

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ This article is primarily about youth-empowerment and outlines the steps for knowledge production: gathering information, analyzing, interpreting and framing the data and then linking the information to power and putting it to use. In the author's own words it, "examines the relationship between knowledge and power and provides examples of knowledge production in the context of real-life campaigns where youth are using information as a tool for social change."

Kirshner, Ben; O'Donoghue, Jennifer; McLaughlin, Milbrey

Youth-Adult Research Collaborations: Bringing Youth Voice to the Research Process

Chapter 7 of "Organized Activities as Contexts of Development: Extracurricular Activities, After-School and Community Programs" by J. Mahoney, R. Larson and J. Eddies (eds.)

■ This chapter describes a framework for understanding youth-adult research partnerships and that framework is used to examine two research projects. The author's framework lists six dimensions that are discussed across the different methodologies, beginning with the question, "What will the interaction between youth and adults look like?" Included in the chapter are the two examples of Youth Adult Research Collaboration that are examined. Using the six dimension the authors characterize one strategy as "youth as research assistants" and the other strategy as "youth as research partners." The chapter concludes with a discussion of the benefits, challenges and implications of youth-adult research collaboration.

Kohfeldt, Danielle; Chun, Lina; Grace, Sara; Langhout, Regina Day

Youth Empowerment in Context: Exploring Tensions in School-Based yPAR

American Journal of Community Psychology (2011) 47:28-45

■ This is an excellent article for anyone working in a school setting attempting to make changes through youth

empowerment. The researchers learned about hierarchies in schools and their experience illustrated that the project is not made up of only the "researchers" and the "participants," but other stakeholders such as teachers, parents, principals, etc. For example, they learned how some teachers had more influence than other teachers and far more than the students. The research identified three areas of tension: assumptions about youth's ability to have a say in school rules, structural challenges including the invisible structure of power within the setting, and conflict over what kind of goals the project should have (winnable goals versus critical consciousness).

London, Jonathan K.; Zimmerman, Kristen; Erbstein, Nancy

Youth-Led Research and Evaluation: Tools for Youth, Organizational, and Community Development

New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003

■ This chapter provides case studies and discussion about the ways that youth-led research and evaluation can help link youth and community development goals and outcomes. Youth REP (Research, Evaluation and Planning) includes "strategies to put the youth 'voice' into the community ear and ultimately into action." The chapter provides a table of Youth REP benefits to youth, organizations and communities that could be of value to someone trying to initiate a project and convince stakeholders of the value of youth involvement. Included are sample projects whose outcomes demonstrate the benefits; however, their methodology is not described. Youth IMPACT, a program of the San Francisco Dept. of Children Youth and Families studying 40 community-based organizations, had findings that were distinctly different from adult-led processes. For example, youth found that "trust" was an indicator of a successful youth-serving organization and yet the idea had never been considered previously.

Maglajlic, Reima Ana and Tiffany, Jennifer
Participatory Action Research with Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Youth Participation and Community Change, 2006, 163-181

■ This paper summarizes a youth participatory action research (PAR) project that was unique from other community-based research because it was sponsored by the global organization UNICEF. Working effectively with such a large complex organization provided some specific lessons related to sponsorship including two specific roles for such large sponsors: creating environments in which PAR can thrive and disseminating findings that may inform the development of policies and programs. It was

noted that UNICEF's role was absolutely critical in initiating and funding the work that centered on a practical nation-wide strategy to communicate about HIV/AIDS with young people.

Mead, June P.

Map It! And Turn Up the Volume of Youth Voices

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ This article describes the unique approach of using photography to identify community assets and community deficits in Buffalo, NY, through youth taking pictures of what's working and what's not working, or needs fixing or improvement. The two lists were further broken down. Assets were listed as people or places and deficits defined as things that the youth could do something about and things they could not. From this process two major projects evolved: a riverfront park clean-up and improvements to the playground. Although adult facilitators planned the photo mapping project, the youth made many gains. Overall they gained a sense of empowerment. Their motivation to succeed was increased as was their self-confidence. They developed skills in leadership, problem-solving, planning and decision making. The article closes with suggestions for adopting the community mapping process.

Nygreen, Kysa; Soo, Ah Kwo; Sanchez, Patricia **Urban Youth Building Community: Social Change and participatory Research in Schools, Homes, and Community-Based Organizations**

Youth Participation and Community Change, 2006, 107-123

■ In this article the authors are adult allies in three projects in northern California. They highlight the lessons learned: 1. Adult allies must be conscious of the ways that race, class, gender and culture can shape their relationship with youth; 2. Adult allies need to be up-front about adult-led activities from the outset and adults often have important knowledge to share; 3. Building and fostering safe spaces is an important aspect of participatory research with youth; and 4. Prioritizing relationship building throughout each project was key to building and nurturing relationships.

Ozer, Emily J. and Wright, Dana

Beyond School Spirit: The Effects of Youth-Led Participation in Action Research in Two Urban High Schools

Journal of Research on Adolescence (2012) 22: 267-283

■ This article details the research at two divergent high schools where the Youth-led Participation in Action Research (YPAR) process was initiated and an investigation of its impact on altering student-adult social processes and expanding students' opportunities for influencing decisions and practices that affect them was evaluated. Interviews with faculty (both directly and indirectly involved with YPAR) and YPAR students at the end of each semester were used to assess the opportunities for students' influence on decisions, policies, and practices at each school site. These interviews were coded and the results suggested that YPAR affected the professionalization of students, created novel collegial interactions, and a diversification of domains of influence at both sites. The school with students from recently-immigrated or economically disadvantaged families saw a more dramatic transformation; however, YPAR created meaningful new and personalized roles for students at the school with a more moderate socioeconomic status.

Ozer, Emily J; Ritterman, Miranda; Wanis, Maggie G

Participatory Action Research (PAR) in Middle School: Opportunities, Constraints, and Key Processes

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010) 46:152-166

■ In this very detailed article the researchers describe their experience using Participatory Action Research in a Middle School setting, making it another good resource for those working in a school environment. The intended outcome was to provide disadvantaged students an opportunity to participate in school governance and shape school practices based on their research. After a range of issues were identified the teachers and researchers helped narrow the issues, ultimately choosing two issues they felt were most "winnable." The article spends considerable time discussing the features of the school setting that affected their research. In this setting they found numerous constraints: climate and culture (schools tend to be adult-driven and behavior focused), policy and structure (academic calendar and competing demands), school social network (necessary to have teachers interested and able to collaborate on the issues), space for non-academic activities (very few electives are provided in middle school which is where this work was conducted), student devel-

opment (issues of social maturity in students and inadequate physical space) and teacher development (the need to share power with students and have ongoing technical support regarding research and advocacy).

Phillips, Evelyn Newman; Berg, Marlene J.; Rodriguez, Chiedza; Morgan, Damion
A Case Study of Participatory Action in a Public New England Middle School: Empowerment, Constraints and Challenges

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010)
46:179-194

■ This case study describes the process of implementing an inquiry-based PAR model into a formal urban middle school program intended to reduce dropout rates. Many lessons were learned about working in a school environment; primarily the intervention demonstrated the gap between practice and theory. Critical observations were made, but not appreciated by the teachers. Teachers perceived that their authority was being questioned when students raised the issue of class scheduling. Some topics, such as racism, became “off-limits” by a teacher’s responses to inquiry and the researchers’ silence which inadvertently signaled to students that the topic was off task. The article concludes with three main lessons learned. The researchers should have spent more time at the school prior to the project to establish a relationship with the teachers. This would have given the researchers more credibility. Researchers’ needs should match with student growth and development so as not to be perceived as just an “experiment” that offered limited immediate benefits for the teachers. Teachers and administrators should be committed to the intervention. The top down approach of administrators assigning the project to classrooms left teachers under stress, without voice and disempowered.

Powers, Jane L. and Tiffany, Jennifer S. and Checkoway, Barry
Engaging Youth in Participatory Research and Evaluation

Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, 2006, November (Suppl) S79-S87

■ This article provides four examples of successful projects that illustrate youth participation in research and evaluation. A considerable amount of information regarding the benefits to youth is listed as well as the value of youth in the research process. The article concludes with a list of considerations for engaging youth in participatory projects. (One of the projects is shared in greater detail in Maglajlic, **Participatory Action Research with Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina.**)

Prilleltensky, Isaac

Commentary: Child Wellness and Social Inclusion: Values for Action

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010)
46:238-249

■ This article articulates the values underpinning the philosophy of social inclusion and child wellness, concluding that inclusion is an integral part of wellness, but it is not a substitute for it. Child wellness is also embedded in family and community wellness. The article notes that PAR (Participatory Action Research) is a “wonderful” methodology to achieve wellness goals, but is not the main focus of this article.

Ren, Julie Yunyi; Langhout, Regina Day
A Recess Evaluation with the Players: Taking Steps Toward Participatory Action Research

American Journal of Community Psychology (2010)
46:124-138

■ This study of playground use at an elementary school was instigated after a climate survey indicated that peer relationships were not as positive as they could be. The principal wanted to reduce playground conflict and promote pro-social behavior. The invited undergraduates used the opportunity to investigate the problem more in-depth using the children as resources. There were very few challenges working in this environment because of the buy-in of the principal and the limited use of recess aides who were paid for their time. Student focus groups gave possible solutions to the three main problems (resource availability, fighting, and rules as an inadequate solution). They helped to clarify observational data and produced numerous ideas for ways to make recess better. Another important change was an attitudinal shift on the part of some school staff: children were permitted to be seen as a resource for solutions, not as only the problem.

Sabo, Kim Flores

Recommended Resource, Tip Sheet 1

Youth participatory evaluation: Strategies for engaging young people.

San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 2007

<http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0787983926.html>

Sabo, Kim

A Vygotskian Perspective on Youth Participatory Evaluation

New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003

■ This article examines four youth-run or -led evaluation projects that supported youth to move beyond their socially determined roles and become active participants in both evaluation and their own growth. Very few details are provided of each example, but within these evaluation projects youth learned many specific skills: survey development and analysis, logic model development, program planning, focus group facilitation, and data analysis. The evaluation processes facilitated a decrease in alienation, supporting youth to understand their ability to affect change within the community. Youth evaluators talked about their pride in their accomplishments for the community and for other youth.

Shuster, Katie Richards

Youth Participation in Public Policy at the Local Level New Lessons from Michigan Municipalities

National Civic Review, Winter 2009

■ Several Michigan municipalities that involve youth are described in this paper. The authors conclude that youth should be involved in public policy, including advising the mayor and city council members, participating in public proceedings and serving on boards.

Stovall, David; and Delgado, Natalia

“Knowing the Ledge”: Participatory Action Research as Legal Studies for Urban High School Youth

New Directions for Youth Development, No 123 Fall 2009

■ In a class on street law, high school freshmen analyzed the processes of the judicial system to understand and improve their lives. The intent of the course was to initiate a broader dialogue with the youth around their relationships to the criminal justice system. Instead of traditional course planning, the themes for the course were generated with the students. The project also used many components of PAR: collective strategizing, reflections about power, etc., but the article focuses more on the course contents and the mock trial presentation to the student body.

Strack, Robert W.; Magil, Cathleen; McDonagh, Kara

Engaging Youth Through Photovoice

Health Promotion Practice, January 2004, No. 1, 49-58

■ This article focuses on one photovoice project in Baltimore; however, it clearly outlines the method from site

selection and equipment to exhibiting the project. The authors provide recommendations including a curriculum outline. Other specific recommendations include: selecting the right site with support for the project, a youth to adult ratio of 5:1, and having at least 20 weeks to conduct the project. The paper concludes with measures to be taken to ensure youth empowerment through photovoice. Included here is a discussion of the role of power and the recommendation that adults involved (with power) must find the appropriate places for youth to express themselves to influential adults.

Suleiman, Ahna Ballonoff; Soleimanour, Samira; London, Jonathan

Youth Acton for Health Through Youth-Led Research

“Youth Participation and Community Change” 2006, The Harvard Press, Inc.

■ This article examines the benefits of engaging youth in health research, presents youth engagement strategies and analyzes and discusses the experiences with a cohort of youth-led research projects aiming to improve adolescent health and other outcomes. The authors conclude that key components are necessary for success: decision making power must be transparent to all partners from the onset, youth should have opportunities to realize the purpose and value of their work so that they can feel connected to the process, there needs to be a realistic timeline and all partners must be committed to implementing and sustaining the action effort initiated by youth. The article includes a table that summarizes the benefits of engaging youth in action research that focuses specifically on health.

Voakes, Les

Listening to the Experts

New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003

■ This article describes a conference in Ottawa, Canada, for groups using Town Youth Participation Strategies (TYPS). The conference was organized for sharing experiences and to evaluate the TYPS project. There were several ways for participants to express and evaluate aspects of the TYPS model and their own center that could be used by other organizations. Flip Charts and Graffiti Walls allowed participants to finish a variety of sentences such as, “Our most successful activity has been...” with youth using one color and adults another. Bragging Booths were created by the youth delegates from each center to demonstrate their best practices through a variety of media. Workshops were hosted by youth who also secured evaluation comments from participants and the Modified Social Stress Model, MSSM, was used to evaluate how a given

activity, program or policy will affect youth. A blueprint of what had been working well and what needed to be done was obvious after each group presented their findings.

Wang, Caroline C.

Youth Participation in Photovoice as a Strategy for Community Change

Youth Participation and Community Change, 2006, 147-161

■ This article by Wang, who initially created Photovoice in the '90's for use researching women's health issues, looks at the use of Photovoice across ten different projects involving youth. A Table is provided for comparing the ten projects with an easy to read paragraph about each one. Wang clearly outlines a nine-step strategy with great focus on consent for participants, consent for photo subjects and consent to publish and display the photographs. The article concludes with a discussion on the benefits as well as challenges of Photovoice with youth, especially noting the prevalence of sharing images on the internet.

Wilson, Nance; Dasho, Stefan; Martin, Anna C.; Wallerstein, Nina; Wang, Caroline, C.; Minkler, Meredith

Engaging Youth Adolescents in Social Action Through Photovoice: The Youth Empowerment Strategies (YES!) Project

The Journal of early Adolescence, 2007 241-261

■ This article describes an after school empowerment program where Photovoice was used with early adolescents (ages 9-12) to identify assets and issues at their schools with the goal of initiating group-designed social action projects, not just a display of issues. A table in the article outlines social action themes and projects by 10 different groups and three are described in detail. The article includes a curriculum that was used by the groups. One challenge that was identified involved the youth's ability to free write (whether due to lack of experience with critical thinking, resistance to writing, or negative attitudes). To aid in the youth's expression of, "How does this affect our lives?" the youth created a storyboard (see Data Analysis Strategies) that identified what came before and after the photo. Facilitators also assisted participants, including in some cases receiving dictation. The authors conclude that Photovoice is a rich tool for youth, but should be adapted for specific populations and environments. In addition to the challenge of writing, as noted above, they also suggest training in picture taking and warn facilitators to balance the goal of allowing youth personal control and power with the need to provide guidance to avoid failure.

Zeldin, Shep; Camino, Linda; Mook, Carrie **The Adoption of Innovation in Youth Organizations: Creating the Conditions for Youth-Adult Partnerships**

Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2005

■ This article identifies six guidelines for implementing Y-AP. It addresses defining purpose, mobilizing stakeholders, messaging about Y-AP, addressing organizational changes, addressing power issues and institutionalizing roles for youth.

Zeldin, Shep and Collura, Jessica

Recommended Resource, Tip Sheet 1.

Being Y-AP Savvy: A primer on creating and sustaining youth-adult partnerships.

University of Wisconsin-Extension, (2010).

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthadultpartnership/2011/07/28/being-y-ap-savvy-a-primer-on-creating-sustaining-youth-adult-partnerships/>

Zeldin, Shep; O'Connor, Cailin; Camino, Linda **Youth as Evaluators: What's an adult to do?**

ACT for Youth Update Center of Excellence: prACTice Matters, newsletter, January 2006

■ This is a brief article that compiles information from a variety of reports on youth involvement in research and evaluation. Highlighted are outcomes for youth and a description of the Youth and Adult Partners for Program Excellence (YALPE): A Practical Guide for Program Assessment and Action Planning, including the five phases of the process.

Zimmerman, Kristen; and London, Jonathan **Getting to Go: Building Organizational Capacity to Engage in Youth-led Research, Evaluation, and Planning**

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

■ This article provides an overview of Youth in Focus. Youth in Focus helps organizations to develop capacity to integrate youth-led research, evaluation and planning (REP) into their programs, organizations and community initiatives. Highlighted in the article is a group they worked with, Youth IMPACT (described in more detail by London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein in **Youth-Led Research and Evaluation: Tools for Youth, Organizational, and Community Development**, New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003). The article continues with a list of obstacles and questions to ask before taking on REP.

Literature that involves research in a school setting

Brown, Kelli R. McCormack; McDermott, Robert J.; Bryant, Carol A.; Forthofer, Melinda S.

Youth as Community Researchers

Community Youth Development Journal, (2003) Vol. 4, No. 1

Cammarota, Julio; Romero, Augustine F.

A Social Justice Epistemology and Pedagogy for Latina/o Students: Transforming Public Education with Participatory Action Research

New Directions for Youth Development, No 123 Fall 2009

Harris, Erin

Afterschool Evaluation 101: How to Evaluate an Expanded Learning Program

Harvard Family research Project, Version 1.0, December 2011 (a recommended curriculum)

Kohfeldt, Danielle; Chhun, Lina; Grace; Sara; Langhout; Regina Day

Youth Empowerment in Context: Exploring Tensions in School-Based yPAR

American Journal of Community Psychology (2011) 47:28-45

Nygreen, Kysa; Soo, Ah Kwo; Sanchez, Patricia

Urban Youth Building Community: Social Change and participatory Research in Schools, Homes, and Community-Based Organizations

*Youth Participation and Community Change, (2006) 107-123
(one school example.)*

Ozer, Emily J. and Wright, Dana

Beyond School Spirit: The Effects of Youth-Led Participation in Action Research in Two Urban High Schools

Journal of Research on Adolescence (2012) 22: 267-283

Ozer, Emily J.; Ritterman, Miranda; Wanis, Maggie G

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Phillips, Evelyn Newman; Berg, Marlene J.; Rodriguez, Chiedza; Morgan, Damion

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American Journal of Community Psychology (2010) 46:179-194

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Wilson, Nance; Dasho, Stefan; Martin, Anna C.; Wallerstein, Nina; Wang, Caroline, C.; Minkler, Meredith

Engaging Youth Adolescents in Social Action Through Photovoice: The Youth Empowerment Strategies (YES!) Project

The Journal of early Adolescence, (2007) 241-261

Literature that cites the benefits of youth involvement

Anyon, Yolanda and Naughton, Sandra

Youth Empowerment: the Contributions and Challenges of Youth-Led research in a High-Poverty, Urban Community (More specifically the benefits to youth.)

JGC Issue Brief: Youth Empowerment, February, 2003

Brown, Kelli R. McCormack; McDermott, Robert J.; Bryant, Carol A.; Forthofer, Melinda S.

Youth as Community Researchers

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

Chawla, Louise and Driskell, David

The Growing up in Cities Project: Global Perspectives on Children and Youth as Catalysts for Community Change

Youth Participation and Community Change, 2006, 183-200 (benefits p. 198.)

Foster-Fishman, Pennie; Nowell, Brenda; Deacon, Zermarie; Nievar, M. Angela; McCann, Peggy

Using Methods That Matter: The Impact of Reflection, Dialogue, and Voice

American Journal Community Psychology (2005) 36:275-291

Goodyear, Leslie K.

Engaging Young People in Evaluation as a Strategy for Evaluation Field-Building and Innovation

Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

Goodyear, Leslie K. and Checkoway, Barry

Establishing the Importance of Youth Participation in Community Evaluation and Research

Guest Editors for Community Youth Development Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003

London, Jonathan K.; Zimmerman, Kristen; Erbstein, Nancy

Youth-Led Research and Evaluation: Tools for Youth, Organizational, and Community Development

New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003

Mead, June P.

Map It! And Turn Up the Volume of Youth Voices

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Powers, Jane L. and Tiffany, Jennifer S.

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Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, 2006, November (Suppl) S79-S87

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A Vygotskian Perspective on Youth Participatory Evaluation

New Directions for Evaluation, no. 98, Summer 2003

Suleiman, Ahna Ballonoff; Soleimanour, Samira; London, Jonathan

Youth Acton for Health Through Youth-Led Research

"Youth Participation and Community Change" 2006, The Harvard Press, Inc.

(Table p. 130 benefits of engaging youth in action research that focuses specifically on health)

Zeldin, Shep; O'Connor, Cailin; Camino, Linda

Youth as Evaluators: What's an adult to do?

ACT for Youth Update Center of Excellence: prACTice Matters, newsletter, January 2006

