Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)
Agenda

- Review of YPAR
- YPAR in Action: RYSE Center
- YPAR Adaptations: Youth Voice Modules
- Questions and Considerations for YPAR
What is YPAR?

Youth-led participatory action research is an innovative approach to research and positive adolescent development that engages adolescents as experts to improve their lives, communities and the institutions that seek to serve them. It has been used to address many different issues in diverse contexts and settings by several fields and disciplines. (Ozer & Piatt, 2017).
What is YPAR?

- Research-action cycle
- Multiple phases
- Focus on equity
- Youth-led with support from adult allies/facilitators
- Improve schools and communities

Photo credit/permissions: SF Peer Resources
Rapid Recent Growth of YPAR Research

- Anyon et al. 2018 PRISMA review of U.S. literature up to 2016 (3,724 studies, most after 2009); 800 from 2016-2019

- 67 studies of impact (50% educational, 40% social inequalities, 32% health, 25% violence/safety; no overall ES calculated)

- Diverse individual health outcomes (e.g. substance use, healthy food access, physical activity, asthma, birth control availability, sexual harassment)

- Policy outcomes all health related (e.g. access to high-quality food, targeted marketing of tobacco; Kennedy et al. 2019)
New Virtual Learning Curriculum!

CLICK HERE
Why Engage in YPAR?

Intersection of sources & forms of knowledge:

- youth as living experts and sources of wisdom about questions as well as answers
- co-creation with multiple perspectives enriches inquiry and discovery
- recognize that research has historically been used to preserve existing oppressive power structures (e.g., Kirkland, 2019)
- interrogate how our own involvement in the research enterprise may shape power dynamics
YPAR in Action:
RYSE Youth Center
About RYSE

Born from youth organizing

Created to address and promote health equity

Integrative model

Focus on systems change, values driven

RYSE creates safe spaces grounded in social justice that build youth power for young people to love, learn, educate, heal and transform their lives and communities.
RYSE Center YPAR Projects

RYSE’s listening campaign is an inquiry of the experiences and articulations of trauma, violence, coping, and healing of young people of color in Richmond.

- RYSE Health Home Clinic (2019)
- Academic and Career Barriers (2018)
- Gender and sexual-based violence (2017-2018)
- LGBTQ safety and visibility (2016)
- School to prison pipeline (2016)
- Mental Health and Coping (2015)
YPAR on Mental Health and Coping

- Background on Public Health Internship
- Topic, Issue, Purpose, Research Question
- Mixed methods
  - Quantitative: ~100 Student Surveys
  - Qualitative: 1 Focus group & 10 Individual Interviews
- Key Findings:
  - Youth find that weed is more accessible than talking to an adult
  - Youth feel that talking to adults can be potentially harmful
- Conclusion
- Action Plan: Chat Lounge
RYSE Health Home Clinic

- Background and context of project
- YPAR adaptation
  - Youth Community Health Needs Assessment
- Initial findings
  - Prioritizing mental health
  - Service providers that look like them
  - Youth expressed that they have never been asked these types of questions
- Continued work
YPAR in Action:
Berkeley and San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) Research Practice Partnership
**Priority #1:** To build understanding of the primary drivers of inequalities in *chronic absenteeism* among SFUSD secondary students, especially those who are African-American, currently in foster care, homeless/marginally housed and/or receive special education services, identifying effective practices to reduce these inequalities.

**Priority #2:** To study and promote the consideration of research evidence generated by students, along with other forms of input and evidence, in routine SFUSD improvement practices.
Youth Voice Modules

- Partnership with San Francisco Peer Resources and SFUSD
  - collaborative process for curriculum development
  - embedded in existing curriculum and youth voice work

- Consultative workshops (rather than full YPAR)
  - invite students to critically analyze SFUSD school climate data, specifically around a problem of practice
  - opportunity and need to leverage student expertise
  - focus on promoting equitable conditions

- Examples of problem of practice:
  - sense of belonging
  - academic support
Youth Findings

How often do administrators, teachers, and other staff ask for your opinion or input regarding school policy?  
436 responses

How often do you feel like the following people value and listen to your input?
How Site Staff Used and Responded to Student Analyses, Interpretations, and Implications

● Middle school site - students presented findings to principal
  ○ principal enthusiastic about continuing conversation about how to better engage student voice in site-level decision-making processes
  ○ principal collected notes and products that students developed

● Continued partnership
  ○ Technical assistance for other youth voice projects
How District Office Staff Used and Responded to Student Analyses, Interpretations, and Implications

- Distribute survey results more broadly, with greater detail
- Focus on clarity of content during survey redesign sessions
- Focus on brevity of content during survey redesign sessions
- Improve translations
- Improve communication about survey purpose and confidentiality (see example below):

Subject: Take Your Spring Student SEL Survey

Hello SFUSD Student,

Today, you are being asked to think about yourself and your experiences in school. The results of this survey will be used to help improve your school.

The information collected on these surveys will not be part of your grade or reflected on your report card, so please answer honestly. There are no right or wrong answers, and no one at your school will know your answers.
Youth Voice in this Historical Moment: Where and How is it Informing K-12?

17-year-old Mission District teen leads protest of thousands in San Francisco

Amy Graff
June 8, 2020 | Updated: July 13, 2020 6:04 pm

From the steps of Mission High School in San Francisco, 17-year-old Simone Jacques addressed thousands of protesters in a crowd that stretched for blocks along Dolores Avenue and spilled across Dolores Park.

Jacques and her friends organized the demonstration through an Instagram group called NoJusticeNoPeaceSF that now has nearly 30,000 followers.

"My name is Simone," said Jacques, her voice booming through a microphone as she welcomed the mass of people holding signs and wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the words "Black Lives Matter."

"I'm black and proud," she went on. "I'm AfroLatina and proud."
Pandemic Exacerbated Inequities

- Educational and basic inequalities visible and exacerbated
- Food and technology needs, family contact major emphases
- Digital bandwidth; quiet and safe, stable spaces
- Mental health; loss of in-person wellness supports, including LGBTQ+ supportive spaces

SFUSD Data Show Widening Learning Gaps During COVID-19

Updated: Jan 29

- Data from San Francisco Unified School District found disparities among student groups in attendance and academic performance during COVID compared to prior years
- SFUSD identified 910 students who attended class less than 40% of the time, a majority of whom are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and found evidence of more acute learning loss among minority students
- The data suggests remote learning has had an unequal impact along socioeconomic and racial lines among the district's approximately 52,000 students
- SF public schools have been closed for in-person learning since March 2020, while
Questions Taken Up by YPAR in Pandemic

- Examples of role of YPAR in Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) efforts:
  - Student engagement in the current Covid-19 context and moving forward?
  - Moving beyond learning loss/gaps frame, what are other critical equity issues that need attention?
  - How might we re-imagine schools to be more equitable in the return to in-person?
  - YPAR to engage students in re-envisioning what education looks like, sounds like, and feels like.
  - Role of YPAR and other forms of student voice in vision, assessment, evaluation
IN WHAT WAYS DO YOUR CLASSMATES AND TEACHER SUPPORT YOUR ONLINE LEARNING?

Ex: teachers are more lenient with deadlines, classmates are more willing to help each other with assignments
IN WHAT AREAS DO YOU FEEL A LACK OF SUPPORT IN YOUR ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE?

Ex: feeling stressed all the time

- feeling tired during and after class, and I feel tired in the morning because I have to do work the night before.
- I feel like you can't really get help from teachers unless you have an I.E.P.
- It's hard to get in contact with certain teachers.
- I feel very distracted during class and struggle to pay attention.
- I feel like there is a lack of support on trying to get us back to school.
- Mental health, and how the students are handling their work. Also if they are giving us too much work to do.
- Mental health, they'll ask how we're doing but they don't really care. Especially with a lot of homework they know it can be stressful but don't do anything about it.
- Having so much work to do and not decreasing the amount but actually increasing it.

HOW CAN TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS BETTER SUPPORT YOU?

Ex: designated drop-in counseling hours, mindfulness exercises during class

- Try to be flexible with late work, like some teachers take a full letter grade off if you are even one minute past the deadline, which is kind of hard.
- Probably go a little easier on the harsh grading. Mostly because a lot of students find it more difficult to do the work from home.
- Maybe some mindfulness exercises break and assign enough work that isn't a burden to prevent burnout.
- Teachers can be helpful by posting the lessons on google classroom so students can go back and look, in case they missed something in class.
- Teachers can better support us by asking for feedback and understanding we all learn in different ways and paces.
- Teachers and administrators can better support me by realizing we have a life and that life doesn't just consist of school.
- I think we need more breaks.
- At least spend 5 minutes a class, talking about mental health or at least having a break.
- Actually changing their lesson based off of the feedback.
- Being more flexible with time.
- For administrators, be more student-centered. Check in with individual students, come to Zoom classes and ask students how they are (that's been done once or twice).
YPAR Questions and Considerations

- Youth must feel connected to the research topic
- Sustainable and supportive structures for youth engaging in YPAR
- Avoiding performative, extractive, and tokenizing processes
- Finding ways to embed YPAR work in existing structures
- How can YPAR and other processes transform unequal power structures & promote equitable implementation and decision-making?
- What does look like for youth voice to be authentically heard? Staying critical about whose voices are heard.
- Power and adult readiness
- Does YPAR make sense in this context
Leili Lyman
YPAR Testimonial
Thank You and Acknowledgements

- Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation (OPRE)
- San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)
- San Francisco Research, Planning & Assessment (RPA) Office
- San Francisco Peer Resources
- William T. Grant Foundation
- RYSE Center
- UC Berkeley
- Dr. Emily Ozer