Youth-Led Participatory Research (YPAR) Resources

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Websites: Please visit yparhub.berkeley.edu for YPAR curricula and examples from diverse contexts; https://www.unicef-irc.org/adolescent-research-methods/ for UNICEF research brief on YPAR available April 2017. For the Innovations for Youth (I4Y) Center: http://i4y.berkeley.edu/home

Brief video about the Best Practices Club YPAR project by O’Connell HS graduate and filmmaker Matthew Salanoa: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LLYXLTW0WA

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Selected Academic Literature:

Ozer, E.J., Cantor, J.P., Cruz, G.W., Fox, B., Hubbard, E., & Moret, L. (2008). The diffusion of youth-led participatory research in urban schools: The role of the prevention support system in implementation and sustainability. American Journal of Community Psychology, 41(3), 278-289. Paper with community collaborators on youth-led research project (SF Peer Resources organization and teachers) and graduate student analyzes strategies used in our project to build capacity for schools and CBO’s to implement youth-led research, using a new conceptual framework for diffusion of innovation developed by the CDC and colleagues.


Ozer, E.J., & Schotland, M. (2010). Psychological empowerment among urban youth: Measure development and relationship to psychosocial functioning. Health Education and Behavior, 38(4), 348-356. Drawing from existing theory and measures in the psychological empowerment field, as well as interview and survey data the participatory research project, we present a framework and psychometric analyses for a new measure of assessing psychological empowerment among diverse urban teens.

Ozer, E.J., & Wright, D. (2012). Beyond school spirit: The effects of youth-led participatory action research in two urban high schools. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 22(2), 267-283. Qualitative paper on how YPAR affected four diverse public high schools in terms of: a) creating or strengthening opportunities for students to provide input on decisions, policies, and practices within these school settings; and b) expanding the students’ social networks and engaging adults as allies in their research and change efforts. Further, we consider the domains in which existing or new mechanisms of student influence operate, such as the planning of extracurricular “spirit” activities versus providing input on the academic curriculum or operations of the school site. Third, we analyze multiple features of the YPAR projects and their host schools to gain insights into the conditions under which changes in opportunities for student autonomy were initiated and sustained over time. Data included interviews with school staff; student focus groups, and extensive classroom observations.
Ozer, E.J., & Douglas, L. (2013). The impact of participatory research on urban teens: An experimental evaluation. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 51*(1-2), 66-75. Uses experimental design to test the effects of participatory research on teens (as compared to students in the same school who participated in a direct service youth development program. Despite a conservative design, we demonstrate a modest but significant effect on psychological empowerment including teens' participatory behavior, strategic thinking, and motivation to improve their schools. This is the first study to my knowledge to test youth-led research (or any similar type of youth development program) with an experimental design in schools (as opposed to students in selected groups such as a summer program).


Ozer, E.J. (2016). Youth-Led Participatory Action Research. In L. A. Jason & D. S. Glenwick (Eds.), *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. This chapter discusses youth-led participatory action research (YPAR), a change process that engages students in identifying problems that they want to improve, conducting research to understand the nature of the problems, and advocating for changes based on research evidence. After providing an overview of YPAR and its core processes, the chapter reviews the literature regarding the effects of YPAR on youth and their settings and identifies the benefits of YPAR.

Other selected chapters and synthesis papers on YPAR:


