
DIVERSITY, DIALOGUES,
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:
AMPLIFYING THE VOICES
OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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THREE QUESTIONS:

1. What are some strategies for amplifying the voices of young people?
 2. What are some strategies for amplifying the voices of young people, in areas that are becoming more segregated and more diverse?
 3. Should a social agency have a strategy for youth empowerment and, if so, what should it be?
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**WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES FOR AMPLIFYING
THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE?**

MIDDLE ADOLESCENCE

Searching for their social identity

Awareness of inequities and discrimination

Want to take action against injustices

“It’s not fair!”

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES

Active participation and real power in decision-making, not passive presence and token roles in adult agencies.

Real effects on the process, influencing decisions, creating change -
-- not the number of times they attend meetings or times they speak, unless they have real effects on the process.

TWO ROLES OF YOUTH IN SOCIETY

1. Youth as resources and assets

Competent “citizens” and civic leaders with a right to participate and a responsibility to serve their communities.

2. Youth as problems and needs

“At risk” youth who are “troubled and troubling” and passive recipients of services. Limited resources, living in poverty, family instability, physical and mental disabilities, abused and neglected, fear and anxiety, withdrawn from participation, disengaged from democracy.

SEVERAL STRATEGIES

1. What are some strategies for amplifying the voices of young people?
 2. What are some strategies for amplifying the voices of young people, in areas that are becoming more segregated and more diverse?
 3. If a social agency wanted amplify the voices of young people, what would it take?
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OUTCOMES

- Personal and social development
 - Sense of direction and agency
 - Social connectedness
 - Health and well-being
 - Civic competencies
 - Democratic participation
 - Agency political support
 - Better decisions by organizations
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UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Article 12

Children are full-fledged persons with right to express their views in all matters affecting them and have the right to participate in decision-making processes relevant to their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard Recognizes the potential of children to have necessary information about options and consequences, share perspectives as actors of change.

Article 15

Children have the right to express political opinions engage in political processes, join associations, assemble peacefully, think for themselves, say what they think, take action on their beliefs.

NO LIMIT

"There is virtually no limit to what young people can do, no social need they cannot at least do something about. With a broad enough perspective, it's hard to think of a positive social role teenagers have not at some time filled: from leading crusades, commanding armies, advising kings – being kings – to making scientific discoveries, composing symphonies, and exposing injustices. What youth can do is limited more by social and political convention than by capacity, energy, or willingness."

WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES FOR AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE, IN AREAS THAT ARE BECOMING MORE SEGREGATED AND MORE DIVERSE?

YOUTH DIALOGUES ON RACE AND ETHNICITY IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT

People of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American descent are increasing and becoming the majority. People of Western European descent are decreasing and becoming the minority.

More segregated and more diverse.

- Segregation results in issues, disparities, discrimination
- Diversity intensifies incidents

Bigotry, hate speech, verbal threats, harassment, intimidation, name-calling, bullying and cyberbullying. Young woman lynched from tree.

Subtle racism and micro aggressions

White supremacy, hate groups

“Jews will not replace us”

Young people want to communicate and collaborate, but segregation limits them.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase youth dialogues on race and ethnicity
 - Enable young people to build relationships with others who are different from them
 - Plan action projects that challenge discrimination and create change
 - Build school and community capacity
 - Promote youth participation in public policy
 - Involve supportive adults in working with young people
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PARTICIPANTS

- Young people
 - School and community partners
 - Program managers
 - Facilitators
 - Adults as allies
 - Public schools, community agencies, University of Michigan
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STAGES

1. Getting started and building relationships.
 2. Learning about social identities.
 3. Practicing dialogue on hot topics.
 4. Forming alliances and working together
 5. Planning projects of their own choosing
 6. Creating change in schools and communities
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ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECTS

- Forming groups
 - School assemblies and community meetings
 - New courses
 - Teacher training
 - Research projects
 - Public hearing
 - Contacting officials
 - Policy fellows
 - Protest demonstrations
 - Speak for Yourself
 - My Dreams are not a Secret
 - Youthcivilrights.org
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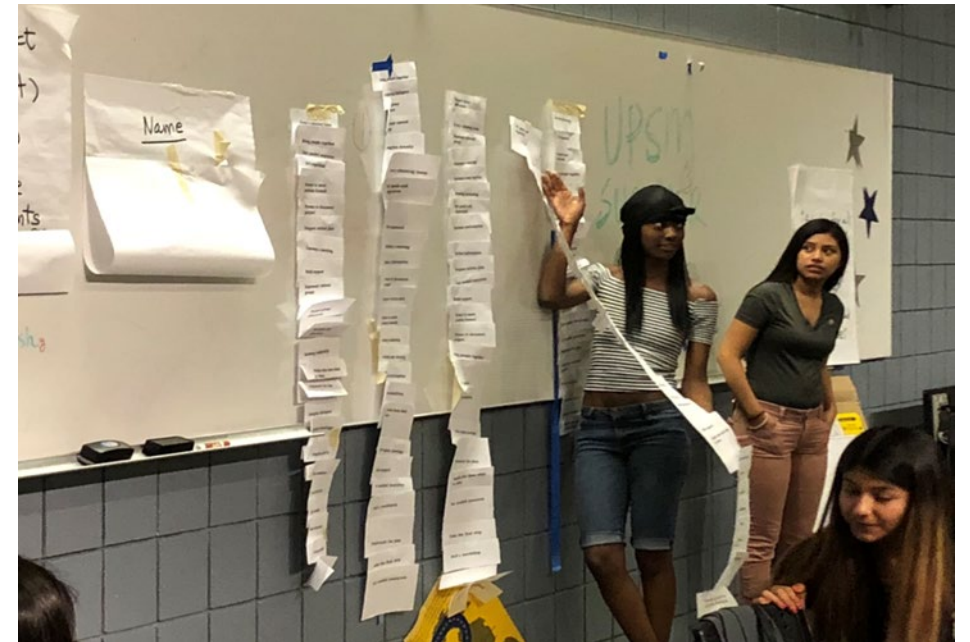


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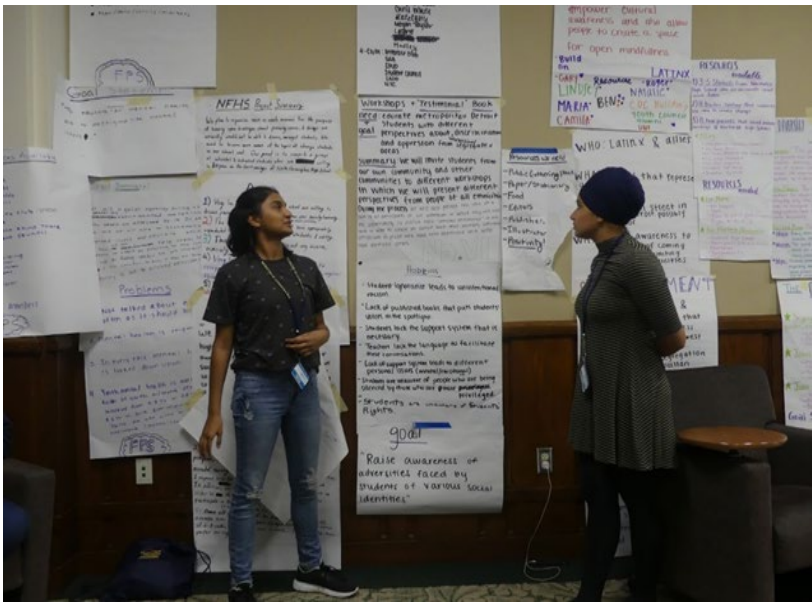


















EVALUATION

- Knowledge of racial and ethnic identities
 - Knowledge of others who are different from themselves
 - Awareness and understanding of racism, racial privilege, and racial discrimination
 - Willingness to take action against racism and segregation in their schools and communities.
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OBSERVATIONS

- Young people are aware of segregation, and want to communicate and collaborate with others who are different from themselves.
 - Given an opportunity, young people will participate in intergroup dialogues, and community action projects, which challenge segregation.
 - Willing to take action against segregation, and planned programs of their own design.
 - Young people working in cohesive groups and arising as leaders AW
 - Adult support for young people striving for social justice
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OBSTACLES

- Adults
 - view youth as “problems” rather than as “resources.”
 - plan programs without involving youth in the process
 - do not share their power with young people.
- Young people
 - accept adult definitions of them
 - do not view themselves as a group that can create change.
 - may have good ideas, but are unsure how to implement them.
 - are not organized enough for real influence
- Adultism: Adults are better than young people are, and they can control them without their agreement. The result is that adults may resist youth initiatives, young people may question themselves, doubt their own abilities, and withdraw from participation

**SHOULD A SOCIAL AGENCY HAVE A STRATEGY FOR
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND, IF SO, WHAT WOULD IT
TAKE?**

ILLUSTRATIVE ELEMENTS

- Formulate a strategy
 - Reaffirm the mission, about health and well-being
 - Make programs more complete and accurate.
 - Both services and empowerment. Services as empowerment
 - Integrate into existing units, or establish new units.
 - Adult professional development
 - Youth education and training
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