



RYSE Youth Center: Youth Participatory Action Research

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Abstract

Since 2000, the RYSE center located in Richmond, CA has centered the voices of youth to combat issues in their local community. Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) has been one of the key tenets of RYSE's approach and implementation of *radical inquiry*. RYSE's radical inquiry strategy aims to shift what research looks like, sounds like, and feels like with an inquiry process that is humanizing and moves toward liberation. This involves ongoing listening and dynamic responsiveness to the priorities, needs, and interests of young people of color. This commentary documents two recent YPAR projects that developed from youth who were interested in exploring gender-based violence, bullying and coping. The commentary documents findings and youth reflections highlighting the liberatory and collaborative nature of YPAR.

Keywords Youth · Participatory research · YPAR · Gender justice · Bullying · Mental health · Coping · Trauma-informed

Background

“We know we can't run the city- it's too complex- but our experience and our voices should count, especially because we're the most affected.”

– Youth Participant, RYSE Listening Campaign, 2013

In response to community violence and a need for safer, empowering spaces young people in Richmond, CA initiated and organized to create the RYSE Center in 2000. The RYSE center serves youth ages 13–21 in Richmond and surrounding communities. Young people participate in programming that

includes direct services, intensive case management and wrap-around services; education and career advancement supports; leadership, organizing and advocacy; media, arts and culture; and health and wellness education. Since our founding, it has been RYSE's charge and responsibility to ask young people whether our work is relevant and responsive to them.

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) has been one of the key tenets of RYSE's approach and implementation of *radical inquiry*. Radical is “grasping or tending to the roots” and for RYSE, our roots are young people of color (RYSE's membership). RYSE's radical inquiry strategy aims to shift what research looks like, sounds like, and feels like with an inquiry process that is humanizing and moves toward

We dedicate this paper to Richmond and West Contra Costa youth; to the visionaries who championed the space now known as RYSE; to the cadre of leaders who imagined and actualized the mission, vision, and values that enabled RYSE to open its doors; some of whom are no longer with us - we honor your legacy, with love. RYSE creates safe spaces grounded in social justice for young people of color to love, learn, educate, heal and transform lives and communities. www.rysecenter.org.

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liberation. This involves ongoing listening and responsiveness to the priorities, needs, and interests of young people of color. RYSE holds ourselves and partners accountable to ensure that policies, investments, and systems that involve young people are relevant to their experiences, responsive to their needs, and grounded in love and healing.

As part of RYSE's radical inquiry strategy, young people have shared their experiences of trauma and violence as atmospheric (Watson et al. 2016). They expressed feeling limited control over their circumstances alongside the desire to contribute in real and meaningful ways to the decisions that impact themselves and their communities. As one of our continuing responses, RYSE adopted and developed a YPAR internship that values youth researchers as experts in their lives, builds empathic understanding of lived experiences, and encourages skill-building and healing through radical inquiry.

YPAR at the RYSE Center

At RYSE, we engage in YPAR to investigate issues that youth are currently facing and then to determine action plans and recommendations that address the issue. Through a partnership with Public Health Solutions (PHS), an internship program exposing high school students to public health principles and the field, RYSE works with student interns who spend an average of two months in the summer conducting research focused on improving school climate. Following completion of the PHS internship, RYSE invites interns to further their public health work by participating in a longer public health internship that focuses on YPAR.

The YPAR internship, facilitated by RYSE Community Health Department staff members, is integrated into the holistic model of the RYSE Center. For interns, this means that in addition to conducting research, they are connected with diverse supports, opportunities, and programs at RYSE. For instance, interns have received academic and career supports, been supported with college applications, and deepened their public health involvement by participating in the RYSE Leadership Institute and other YPAR projects. In this way, interns are oriented with RYSE's full approach and public health praxis.

In the course of their involvement in the YPAR internship, interns participate in workshops and training that provide a sequential introduction to public health and research. Interns first participate in introductory interactive workshops designed to help expand interns' understanding of public health as an integrative and intersectional field. Next, interns brainstorm several issues that they experience in their schools and communities and are guided through selecting a single topic and issue that will be the basis of their YPAR work. Before beginning research design, interns worked to develop an

intersectional lens. An intersectional framework helps describe how oppressions can affect individuals or groups differently along markers of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and more. RYSE staff support interns in researching existing findings and articles about their chosen topic, as well as selecting frameworks such as *the school-to-prison pipeline*, *trauma-informed approaches*, and *gender justice* to help guide youths' research. Through partnerships with graduate students from the UC Berkeley School of Public Health, interns attend workshops on what makes a great research question, and tips and strategies on data collection. After creating a research question, interns engage in trainings on quantitative and qualitative research methods and determine their data collection methods. Once data is collected and analyses completed, interns begin to develop action plans and recommendations from the study's findings.

The following case studies highlight the experience of five youth public health researchers at RYSE. The first case study focuses on young people's experiences and perceptions of gender and sexual-based violence and bullying and the second case study focuses on young people's coping strategies. Their research topics, findings, and testimonials summarize their inquiry and recommended action to address the interconnected issues of gender, sexual based violence/bullying, as well as the use of drugs as a primary coping strategy for young people in Richmond.

Case Study 1: YPAR on Gender and Sexual-Based Violence and Bullying

Project Overview

This first case study provided an example of how youth researchers documented the issue of gender- and sexuality-based violence among youth in their communities and created concrete actionable recommendations to increase the safety of students. For YPAR interns, Dashia Wright, Paul Ruiz, and Lily Boonnam, the topic of gender and sexual based violence and bullying was important to investigate because young people experience gender and sexual based violence and bullying in their Richmond community. The purpose of their YPAR project was to better understand how young people experienced and were impacted by gender and sexual based violence. The youth researchers aimed to identify what supports youth needed to feel safe, develop an action plan for creating safer spaces, and increasing youths access to education and prevention around these issues. During the course of investigating the issue of violence and bullying, Dashia, Paul, and Lily read articles on gender justice, intersectionality, and oppression.

Methods

Over the course of two months from June–August 2017, youth researchers collected 130 surveys and conducted 10 semi-structured interviews for their study. They surveyed 130 high school students ages 14–18 years old (60% male). The majority of the sample were ethnic and racial groups including Latino, Black, Asian, and mixed-race youth. Additionally, 17% of youth identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning. Survey questions asked students about perceptions of safety, (e.g. “Do you feel safe based on your gender/sexuality?”) on a scale from 1 (not safe) to 5 (very safe). Their awareness of gender-based violence was also assessed on a scale from 1 (not familiar) to 5 (very familiar). Lastly, participants were asked to identify primary locations where they witness gender- and sexuality- based violence and bullying (e.g. Where do you see violence and bullying based on gender/sexuality?), for which participants selected from survey options including social media, school, neighborhood, or television and advertisements.

As a follow up to the survey, youth researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide to better understand the context for gender- and sexuality- based violence. Some of the guiding questions included “Based on your gender and/or sexual orientation, what does it mean to feel safe?”, and “Describe how you see or experience gender- and sexuality-based violence in media, school, social media, etc.” Interviews took place at RYSE Center.

RYSE staff and youth researchers worked together to analyze quantitative survey and qualitative interview data. Quantitative data was collected with Google forms and input into Excel spreadsheets for analyses. RYSE staff and youth researchers analyzed the findings by hand (e.g. calculating average scores) and used Excel formulas to uncover patterns in the data (e.g. differences between gender). Youth researchers transcribed the qualitative data from digital recordings of interviews. They then created themes by comparing each transcription’s codes and summaries.

Key Findings

Youth researchers interpreted and summarized their findings from both the survey and interviews. According to the 130 surveys collected from high-school student, violence, bullying, and stereotypes based on gender and sexuality were visible in many areas of their lives, including in social media, TV, and in their schools and neighborhoods. Students were generally unaware of the term, ‘gender-based violence’ as 76% of students indicated that they were ‘Not familiar’ or only ‘Somewhat familiar’ with the term. Even though students reported seeing gender- and sexuality- based violence in

multiple areas of their lives, most indicated that they generally felt safe. For example, 88% of students indicated feeling safe with regard to their gender and 88% felt safe with regard to their sexuality. However, the youth researchers also used an intersectional lens to understand if student reports of safety was related their social identities. When looking at rates by gender, they found that about 80% of male-identified students felt safe based on their gender while only 40% of female-identified respondents felt safe. For LGBTQ students, many reported feeling less safe ($M = 3$) when compared to straight male- ($M = 4.68$) and female-identified students ($M = 4.08$). The majority of participants responded ‘sometimes’ when asked how likely they to step in if they saw gender- and sexuality-based violence.

Findings from the semi-structured interviews provided additional insight to students’ experiences and awareness of gender- and sexuality- based violence. Researchers found differences between male and female groups of students in how they viewed the problem and what is they thought was needed. For example, most young men indicated that gender justice was a “gay issue”, indicating that it affects only a narrow group of people and that they didn’t have anything to do with it if they did not identify as gay. This interview finding related to the survey finding describing how most students did not know or understand gender violence. The majority of female-identified students believed that women were often sexualized and the target of violence. A promising finding from the semi-structured interviews was that students indicated that they needed more education and workshops on gender and violence. Students wanted to get involved, but were unsure of how to do so. These findings suggest the need for more opportunities and spaces where youth can have conversations about gender-based violence and bullying.

Action Plans

The youth researchers identified several areas where their findings could inform actions. For example, one of the study findings indicated that youth mostly saw gender- and sexuality- based violence on social media. In response, the interns recommended building a social media campaign or public service announcements to help spread awareness of gender-based violence and findings from their research study. Youth researchers called for trainings and workshops for teachers, administration, and students about gender justice which included addressing gender and sexual based violence with youth and creating more inclusive and safe school environments for students. They recommend that schools create support groups for young women, young men, and LGBTQ students and work to connect students with resources inside and outside of school.

The youth researchers have also been involved in disseminating their findings and recommendations in numerous spaces including at the National Conference for Health and Domestic Violence held by Futures Without Violence, DeAnza High School Health Academy Board Meeting, and the RYSE Center Youth Leadership Institute as part of a Gender Justice Workshop for 20 peers and staff.

After analyzing the initial data, youth researchers decided to do focus groups with RYSE's different identity groups in order to gather more information and to create intentional opportunities for different conversations about gender-based violence and gender justice. The youth researchers created activities and discussion questions and facilitated their focus groups with RYSE's young women's group, young men's group, and LGBTQ group. As a result, youth researchers conducted four focus groups between October and November 2017 and are currently analyzing that data.

From their Own Words: Youth Reflections on YPAR

The following questions were posed to Dashia, Lily and Paul by RYSE staff after the completion of the YPAR project, providing their reflections on creating this project for this commentary. Each were high school students during the research period and have now all graduated from high school and are enrolled in college. Paul presented the YPAR project for his final senior project. Included are their written responses:

How Did you Initially Feel about the Internship and the YPAR Project?

Dashia: Initially, I wasn't interested that much in YPAR. I joined an internship over the summer because I wanted to get paid. I expected it to be boring and extremely complicated. It was something that I thought I wouldn't enjoy that much. However, throughout the YPAR process, I became more interested and even grew a love for it. I loved the fact that my project related to my community and myself. I was able to shed light to a problem and suggest ways to solve it.

Paul: In the summer of 2017, I started work as a Public Health Solutions intern at the RYSE Center. The Internship was a partnership between my Health Academy and the Contra Costa County Health Department. At first, I wasn't that excited because I didn't really know any background on the RYSE Center. I was sad because some of my friends got assigned in other places. When I finally arrived at the RYSE Center, I met the awesome staff, especially Brian who was my preceptor. The people at the RYSE Center had a big influence on changing my initial perceptions of the study because of how welcoming they were to me

and my co-interns: Lily Boonnam and Dashia Wright. When I enter RYSE, I automatically feel safe.

Before you Conducted the Actual Research, What Preparation/Workshops/Presentations Did you Engage in? How Did you Choose your Topic?

Lily: Some of the preparations we did before the research began involved looking over past RYSE intern YPAR projects. We read and analyzed some articles and learned a little more about RYSE and community health. We also watched some videos to help give us context on various issues like the school to prison pipeline. It was challenging when it came to brainstorming a topic. We thought about some problems affecting youth in our community and we knew we wanted to do something that would be a relevant and interesting. After brainstorming different issues, my co-interns and I decided that gender and sexual based violence would be our main topic.

What Information/Workshop/Presentation Stood out Most during your Preparation?

Dashia: A workshop that stood out the most to me was the cycle of violence. We talked about how everyone is born with the same basic needs. When babies grow up without these basic needs, it affects their health outcomes and how they navigate the world.

Describe your Experiences Creating Surveys, and Conducting Focus Groups/Interview? How Did it Feel Gathering Data from Youth in your Community?

Paul: The most interesting part to me was gathering data from the youth and listening to their experiences. We collected surveys from a good range of students throughout Richmond, El Sobrante, Pinole, and Hercules regions. It was interesting to compare the responses on the surveys with the stories youth mentioned in interviews. Most of the students said they felt safe but mentioned they experience a lot of violence. Several youth mentioned that they constantly had to look over their backs to assure safety when in certain situations, which is not normal.

Dashia: For our quantitative research strategies, we chose to do surveys. Creating the surveys was difficult. We had brainstormed many questions and it was challenging to word and order them in the right way without creating bias. We also conducted qualitative focus groups as part of our action plan. We were able to have

deeper conversations about people's experiences with gender-based violence.

How Did the Data Findings Impact you?

Dashia: When we analyzed our data, I was not surprised at the results but it still moved me. Only 40% of female identified participants said they felt safe based on their gender compared to 90% of male identified participants. This moved me because I could relate to the data. I knew that I didn't feel safe based on my gender, however, I didn't know that the people around me felt the same. It made me look at my community in a different lens because I realized that it wasn't a personal problem but it was a community problem. I am able to see that as a community we need to come together and fight against gender-based violence and help the youth heal.

What Action Plans Did you Initiate Based on your Data Findings?

Dashia: Our action plan included presenting to local organizations, facilitating focus groups and launching a social media campaign with our findings. Presenting our findings was an empowering experience. It was very rewarding because I was able to inform people on research that hasn't been done in our community. I felt proud of our findings because I know that it can bring attention to an ongoing issue. I felt that allowing people to see the issues will encourage them to do something about it.

What Was the most Rewarding Experience during the Project?

Lily: The most rewarding experience during the internship was that our research was mentioned at the National Conference on Health and Domestic Violence. It felt great to have our YPAR Project recognized in a huge room full of adult professionals. They stayed to listen to the youth who conducted research that would be beneficial to the community. A few months ago, I didn't imagine that our research project would take off and be heard. I only expected to complete an internship. I'm glad we all decided to keep going with this project. It gave us many opportunities. I'm glad to have done this YPAR Project with people that shared similar values. The internship had taught us all a lot about what's happening in today's society and we were amazed by the topics

we learned. YPAR supports community transformation and youth voice and organizing by letting young people take part in a major research to help promote transformation and awareness. Youth are exposed to the community more because they spent time connecting with their peers.

Dashia: YPAR is not just a project to me. It is a shift in my mindset. It allows me to open my eyes and become aware of the challenges around me and the role I play in it. This process has reassured me on my career plans. I want to become a psychologist, so I can help people who are experiencing problems in their personal lives, including gender-based violence. I will use the skills I gained from my YPAR project for the rest of my life.

Case Study 2: YPAR on Examining Coping Strategies of Young People in Richmond

Project Overview

In the following YPAR study, youth researchers Leili Lyman and Katherine Escobar investigated the issue of youth drug use and mental health. They saw that many young people in Richmond used drugs as a primary coping strategy and wanted to explore the accessibility and impact of different coping strategies. Leili and Katherine developed a mixed methods study to better understand youths' perceptions of helpful and harmful coping strategies, their reasons for using drugs over other strategies, and their issues with alternatives to drug use. In order to prepare for the current study youth researchers oriented themselves with theories about positive youth development, trauma informed care, and literature regarding the school to prison pipeline.

Methods

From June–August 2015, Leili and Katherine surveyed 100 people, conducted five semi-structured interviews, and facilitated a focus group of 12 youth for their research project. Survey participants were young people in the Richmond community ages 13–21 years old (51% male). The majority of the sample were Latino, Black, Asian, and mixed-race youth. Survey questions included questions about the coping activities they engaged in, (e.g. "How often do you engage in the following activities?") on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). They were also asked to rate how harmful or helpful these activities were on a 4-point scale. Last, participants were asked to

identify how easy it is for them to access these activities on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

A semi-structured interview guide was created to better understand mental health coping activities among young people in Richmond. Some of the guiding questions included, “How does stress affect you?”, “Do young people need more coping support and what kind?”, and “Why aren’t healthy alternatives used?” Interviews and focus groups took place at RYSE Center. Data analysis for this project was completed by youth researchers and RYSE staff using the same approach as the previous case study.

Key Findings

Young people who participated in the YPAR study identified a variety of coping strategies including music, art, sports, friends or peers, marijuana, adults, and counselors. The most frequently used coping strategy was talking to friends or peers with 58% of youth indicating using this strategy ‘often’ or ‘always’; 73% of youth found that friends or peers were ‘sometimes’ to ‘always’ accessible, and 82% found this coping strategy helpful. Additionally, 38% of youth indicated talking with adults, 18% using marijuana, and 15% talking to counselors ‘often’ or ‘always’ to cope. While only 15% of youth reported engaging with counselors or adults, 60% indicated that talking to them would be helpful. Of youth who talked to adults to cope, 77% found this a helpful strategy. Youth identified using alcohol or drugs, fighting or violence, self-harm, and “doing nothing” as harmful coping strategies. When asked about the accessibility of the various coping strategies in their community, young people noted that drugs, specifically marijuana, was more accessible than talking to an adult. Specifically, 70% of youth indicated that marijuana was ‘sometimes’ to ‘always’ accessible and 68% of youth indicated that adults were ‘sometimes’ or ‘always’ accessible as a coping strategy. 28% of youth thought counselors were ‘sometimes’ to ‘always’ accessible and 73% thought friends were ‘sometimes’ to ‘always’ accessible.

Findings from the semi-structured interviews suggested a tremendous amount of mistrust in adults. Young people identified issues with talking to an adult such as miscommunication, disconnection, judgment, and misunderstanding. In some young people’s surveys, they indicated that talking to an adult is potentially more harmful than accessing marijuana. For example, one youth shared the disconnect between youth and adults as potentially related to age, “I’d rather talk to somebody who’s like around my age because they’re more understanding, they probably been through what I’m going through.” Another youth suggested connection with adults would have to be based on trust, “To trust an adult

you need some sort of connection or some sort of prior experience with them”. Youth also spoke about the significance of using marijuana to cope, such as “I feel like nobody understands but marijuana, so marijuana, mary jay... it’s the best stress reliever that’s there. When I don’t have it, it’s like WW3 and a half.” Another youth indicated that marijuana was a necessity in the community they lived in.

Action Plans

Based on these findings, youth researchers created action plans and recommendations for increasing positive coping strategies for youth. YPAR researchers felt that in order for young people to have stronger relationships with adults, they need trust, judgment free spaces, and safe spaces to take risks. They suggested a need to shift the focus from behavioral change to creating structural change. Adults need to approach youth in a more positive strength-based way. Even though many young people identified weed as helpful, they may not be informed on all the potential harmful effects. Youth need more supportive programs for sports, music, and art. It would be beneficial to have trainings for service providers on how to interact with young adults in a more engaging, positive, and restorative way. Schools need more harm reduction and trauma informed models focused on youth development. Schools and cities need to also invest more in safe spaces for young people.

As a part of their action plans, youth researchers created a chat lounge at the RYSE Center. The chat lounge is facilitated by youth researchers and is a safe space for youth to come together, share experiences, and form healthy relationships. The Chat Lounge has become the most attended program at RYSE at the time. In addition, youth researchers hope to continue developing their actions plans and create more educational opportunities for young people to learn about the possible risks associated with marijuana use. Youth researchers share that they have presented their YPAR project in difference spaces including at their internship graduation, conferences, webinars, and at the RYSE Center.

In Her Own Words: Youth Researcher Testimonial

Leili Lyman conducted her YPAR project between May 2015 and December 2015 during her Junior/Senior year of High School. She is now attending the University of California, Berkeley. She has continued to work with RYSE and is training RYSE’s current Public Health Youth Interns and presenting about YPAR practices in youth organizing spaces. The following questions were posed to Leili by RYSE staff after the completion of the YPAR

project, for this commentary. Included are her written responses:

How Did you Get Involved with Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) at RYSE?

When I was in high school, I was part of the health academy. The summer going into my senior year, I was given the opportunity to intern at RYSE through a paid summer public health solutions internship program offered by the health academy. My co intern and I were given the opportunity to conduct a Youth Participatory Action Research Project (YPAR). Brian introduced us to RYSE's Listening Campaign, which is where we got our inspiration for our topic, issue, and purpose for our YPAR. We noticed that the primary coping strategy that youth in Richmond utilized in response to trauma was weed (marijuana), so we wanted to understand why this was utilized more than other coping strategies.

Describe your Experiences Creating Surveys, and Conducting Focus Groups/Interview? How Did it Feel Gathering Data from Youth in your Community?

Creating questions for the surveys was the most challenging part of the YPAR process. We had to make sure that we framed the questions in a way that will help us get the information that we are looking for. The way the questions were asked influenced the responses that we got. We also wanted to make sure that the questions were straightforward and easily accessible to our audience. We used two different methods of research for our YPAR, quantitative surveys and a qualitative focus group and interviews. We did a mixed methods strategy in order to humanize the data and actually connect stories to the numbers. We worked *with* the community not on the community.

How Were you Impacted by the Data Findings?

After we collected the data we organized it in a way where we were able to draw out themes and also connect what we heard to larger theoretical frameworks that we read about. We looked at data trends, patterns, important quotes, and relationships between the quantitative and qualitative data. Key findings were that youth found talking to an adult as potentially harmful and that accessing weed was more accessible than talking to an adult. Although the youth identified that talking to an adult was potentially harmful, they also identified that they needed support from adults. The data findings were not surprising to me because I am from Richmond and many of the youth that I was surrounded by smoked weed. The finding that was the most shocking to me was why they chose to use weed as a primary coping strategy instead of alternative

coping strategies. There is this misconception of the youth of Richmond, often centered on the idea of smoking weed all the time. If only people knew why youth choose to utilize weed, then maybe they would have a different perspective of Richmond youth, and would want to help us find more accessible alternatives, rather than penalize us for our current coping method.

What Action Plans Did you Initiate Based on your Findings?

After gathering the data from my community, it was obvious that one thing our community was missing was a place for youth to come together and talk about issues in their everyday lives. What I liked about YPAR is that it wasn't just doing research for research, it was doing research to create change and action. Knowing this from gathering the data, my co intern and I decided to create Chat Lounge. Our main goal for chat lounge was to create a safe space for youth to come to and talk about a variety of subjects, without the presence of adults, who the youth identified as a group of people who are often the source to their problems.

What Was the most Rewarding Experience?

The most rewarding experience was seeing how popular our program "Chat Lounge" became at RYSE. It was the most attended program at the time, and it was rewarding to see that our research was able to make an impact on our community in some way. We are the ones directly affected in our community by trauma, so we know what is best for us when conducting research. YPAR really sees us as the experts. Our voices can often be neglected so it is important to give us a platform where we can say how we feel and in turn be heard.

What Worked about the YPAR Process?

My co-intern and I were allowed to choose what we wanted to do research on, which made us actually want to do the work because it was on something that we both felt was important and interesting as opposed to having to do work on something that was forced on us. This ownership helped me get out of my comfort zone of always having those of higher authority tell me how to do something. It allowed me to evolve as an intern to later take on the task of running and facilitating our own curriculum. RYSE has also helped me gain experience through this internship. They also guided me with college applications, resume building, and even scholarships. RYSE staff always made sure to check in on how we were doing mentally, and genuinely cared about how we felt. A lot of youth are neglected, especially in schools, so it is nice to go to be surrounded by people that care about your wellbeing. It has been two years since my YPAR project at RYSE. I still use

what I learned in my life today. Themes that we saw from the YPAR are themes that I can connect to in my current college classes at the University of California, Berkeley. RYSE has stayed connected with me for a long time even with my summer internship from high school being long over. They continue to provide me with many different opportunities that are helping me grow as not only an undergrad student, but as a person. Since I was an incoming senior in high school, RYSE has been there for me and watched me grow, and most importantly, everyone at RYSE recognizes this growth which is very motivational for me.

What Does YPAR Mean to you?

YPAR has given me tools that helped me personally and academically. My experience with YPAR has shaped the way I view my community and has influenced what I plan on pursuing as far as higher education. All the issues I learned about through my research with YPAR were facts that were not new to my community or me. The difference with YPAR is that it allows you to go beyond the numerical research and allows you to understand the stories behind what the data shows you. Knowing the stories of certain individuals changed my whole perspective on my community. Richmond has a negative stigma to it, and growing up here you normalize the violence and drugs that we see on a daily in our community. I was also conforming to this idea of Richmond being dangerous. Working at RYSE and conducting YPAR projects has made me realize that my community is hurting, and we are neglected the opportunity to heal properly and instead criminalized for the ways we choose to deal with our everyday struggles and traumas.

Conclusion

Key to RYSE's public health praxis is youth leadership. The YPAR projects allow adult allies to learn from young people as well as build a base of youth leaders excited about the power of research and data to shift conditions of inequity and harm. In late 2017, two YPAR interns presented their research on a plenary panel at the National Conference on Health and Domestic Violence in San Francisco to over 1000 attendees. In Spring 2018, three YPAR interns presented on their inquiry process to school administrators from across California at the Schoolzilla Data Champion Summit. Additionally, RYSE integrates YPAR findings into our Trauma and Healing Learning Series, an ongoing convening for adults to learn from youth expertise in trauma and coping and build their own understanding and skills.

YPAR projects conducted by RYSE's public health interns have informed new programs at RYSE, such as a chat lounge and peer support group, as well as informed ongoing awareness-building and advocacy about the issues. Currently, we are partnering with graduate students from the UC Berkeley School of Public Health to analyze the data we have collected over the last three years. Our goal is to use these findings in order to help inform our policies, practices, and strategies, and offer recommendations on how systems can shift to better support young people of color.

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