# "Savannah is Covered by a Beautiful Wallpaper, but Behind It Hide Skeletons":

# Summary Report on Youth-led Research into Chatham County's Supports and Barriers for Young People

Report Prepared for Deep Center, Step Up Savannah, and the Network for Southern Economic Mobility by:

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## Executive Summary

This final report recounts a nine-month process of youth research capacity-building, beginning with the training of high school and college aged researchers in qualitative methodologies and concluding with both tentative and comprehensive policy recommendations, at the behest of the youth, for altering the landscape of Savannah, Georgia to ensure greater equity of opportunity in particular for minoritized youth and their families.  The research itself is rooted in Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) methods and linked to Humanizing Research traditions and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies.  Utilizing these iterative processes for data generation, youth and adult co-researchers surfaced significant concerns that are elaborated upon in the following report.  Initial code--related to food insecurity; criminal justice (and juvenile justice in particular); poverty; and media representations of minoritized communities were further refined, over time--into structural issues concerned with 1) Safety; 2) Aesthetics and Community Maintenance; 3) Gentrification and Segregation; 4) Maldistribution of Resources Throughout the City.  Clearly these many issues overlap in significant ways; a point the youth reiterated in their analyses of the data over time.  As such, the disintrication of themes should not be taken as a suggestion that root causes—structural and historical racism most prominently among them— don't feed all of these issues.  Rather the roots feed them differentially.  A final point on capacity building is added in at the end of the report related to the importance of 5) Sustained Maintenance of Scaffolded Support in the research process. This is meant particularly to attend to the *process* of building youth capacity for research in service of community change.

**Introduction**

The work here reports on a nine-month research process which began through the training of youth researchers in the tenets of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). YPAR stems from Participatory Action Research traditions that concern themselves primarily with a "belief in collaboration and respect for local knowledge"; "the commitment to social justice" and "trust in the ability of democratic processes to lead to positive personal, organizational and community transformation" Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok, (p. 2011). Given these central tenets, traditional notions of external validity and generalizability often surfaced in research are necessarily troubled with a careful eye on the notion that "although participatory action research seeks social justice and encourages collaboration with stakeholders, it's still research, which has the potential to dehumanize, colonize, misrepresent, and harm (Winn & Winn, 2016, p. 113). As such, co-researchers in the project were further committed to Humanizing traditions of research which focus on "building…relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants" rooted in…reciprocity and respect" (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. xvi). The research itself, however, is not only about gathering—really, producing—data so much as it is about driving community change, most particularly in the case of YPAR, through teaching. Thus, the pedagogical stance of the foregoing work was drawn from Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017) which drove us to "believe that equity and access can best be achieved by centering the dynamic practices and selves of students and communities of color in a critical, additive, and expansive vision of schooling" (p. 3) but also of research practice and policy change.

In practice this meant a few significant choices were made at the front end of the research training and data generation:
1.  Youth, initially those from the Action Research Team (ART) at the Deep Center, were positioned as experts in their communities and their stories. They were then engaged as co-researchers with adults in the research process which meant they were active in the generation of research questions, issue identification, methods selection, data gathering, and then, most importantly, in the analysis of the data as well as the training of other youth in the process of the work. The idea was to cast a wide net related to questions of what was keeping minoritized youth in the city of Savannah narrowly, and Chatham County broadly, from thriving. Functionally this meant that, at the end of the research we had something on the level of 40-45 youth, aged 14-19, conducting various forms of research—to various forms of completion, it should be said—throughout the city. and its surrounds.
2.  Adults, though important to the process, functioned throughout and increasingly toward the end of the nine-month cycle as support staff for the youth. Early scaffolding for the Action Research Team was relatively heavy and included training in the theoretical frameworks/methodologies noted above, as well as exposure to various research methods that might be consonant with and extensions of those frameworks. From there work in rethinking what data might 'count' was undertaken and youth were provided consistent venues to talk through how to elicit data that might match with the questions asked at the front end. Once the data were collected, however, youth were the primary analysts of the results and then became the first-line trainers of their peers in the methods, but also the frameworks that provide the foundation for the work. By this point in the process, adults functioned mostly as organizers, cheerleaders, and resource-providers.

3. Research summits were planned as ways to provide research training and support for youth in the city. This was also a space to generate data analysis as large and small groups in order to make sense of the stories that were collected through various methods along the way.

**Method**

Deep Center Action Research Team members were party to weekly research training and data analysis seminars with their adult co-researchers on the staff. University of Georgia and Missouri State University co-researchers engaged with the ART in periodic training and re/visioning sessions at the front end of the process to introduce not only the methodology (YPAR) but also the theoretical framework which entailed reframing notions of what counted as data. ART members, as part of the iterative process, identified a research question: *How do Savannah Chatham County Public School System's discipline policies address root causes and accountability processes?* In order to address this question, ART co-researchers developed a survey as well as a narrative task to elicit stories from fellow youth. After gathering the data, the ART analyzed it for core themes and then utilized that process to train their peers in the steps of the research training along the way. That is, after deciding on the question, gathering and analyzing the data, Deep engineered three youth summits, gathering youth from organizations throughout the city, to teach them YPAR methods. The first youth summit occurred in late March of 2019. Here ART members trained their peers in topic identification and the generation of research questions. Youth were then introduced to various methods for gathering data (photo elicitation; surveys; individual and focus interviews; narrative, document analysis).

Groups were formed around issues of concern, identified by youth, and research questions were generated, methods for data generation decided upon, and then all participants were sent on their way to gather data for the purpose of analysis at the next youth summit in the middle of May. In May 2019 it became clear that some youth were returning with data related to their questions, but also that new youth who had not yet been trained in the methodology nor methods would also be attending. As such, ART members planned a split youth summit which allowed youth who came with data to analyze it with peers as well as allowing youth without data to practice gathering it through photo elicitation, participant observation, and youth-guided walking tours. As before, youth were sent out from the summit with questions to answer and methods for gathering data. In the final youth summit, ART members spent time analyzing the data gathered with the youth present and providing a guiding vision forward for youth participation in community change processes. The report here collects and distills the data generated by youth and augments their ongoing analysis of the findings in the field.

**Results**

*1ˢᵗ Youth Summit*

In the first youth summit, initial groups formed around issues of food insecurity, crime, juvenile justice, media portrayals of minoritized populations, and poverty. Throughout this brainstorming process, youth considered—many in the open, with one another, for the first time—how these interlocking systems affected them. We trace here how these initial codes coalesced and were eventually refined during the third youth summit into the related structural themes of safety;

aesthetics and community maintenance; gentrification and segregation; and maldistribution of resources throughout the city.

What follows is a summary of their findings—the systems the groups identified as problematic and
the initial brainstorming questions they produced as they began their investigative journey as qualitative researchers in the city of Savannah. It is important to note that youth chose the larger category groups from among a number of options presented. Among the gathered youth, these were in some measure—whether by interest or concern—the most pressing issues in need of investigation. Along with the larger groupings we present the preliminary questions youth determined worth asking when considering research into the topic. These questions were reworked throughout the process, but they are useful here in providing a broader sense of the shape of concerns as youth thought about them together:

*Food Insecurity*

It is clear from the initial group inquiry into food insecurity that youth tie 'good' food in schools to their sense of how schools value them. Many of our youth exist in food-insecure situations and see bad or gross food at schools as an extension of institutional neglect. This is a way to show that they aren't cared for, in other words. Youth don't blame individuals in this regard, they just wonder why the food can't be better. Circled around parchment paper, they wrote questions such as:

- How does having school lunches available affect kids' academic and daily routines?
- Why is there a limited amount of food for kids in school lunch?
- Why are school lunch periods so short that kids are rushed through eating?

The food insecurity group focused specifically on the school lunch program and quickly drilled down into questions that show their understanding of the program as a flawed system where small changes could yield big improvements for the youth who depend on in-school meals.

*Crime*

Youth are also concerned about violence: structural, symbolic, institutional, state-sponsored, and physical. Many of the youth have experienced the first four modes first-hand and others have also experienced the fifth personally. From the discussion and ensuing questions, it is clear that youth in Savannah *are* concerned with crime, but their questions also show a great concern for the ways that youth are incarcerated and then returned to society with little support that might foster larger structural change to the benefit of the community. They asked questions such as:

- Why does Savannah have a high rate of crime even though it is a smaller city?
- How do people view people who commit crimes?
- How do people feel when they commit crimes?
- Why do people commit crime?
- How do criminals who commit crime feel about society?
- How do high rates of crime affect communities?

From these questions, we can see that youth show concern for communities that have high crime rates, but they are equally interested in understanding *why* and *how* Savannah neighborhoods are affected and how criminals fit into the larger community upon reintroduction into society post-incarceration. The very definition of who counts as a criminal (and why) was also discussed.

*Juvenile Justice System*

Two groups decided to take on juvenile justice as a topic. From these conversations, it became apparent that youth experience feelings of disconnect between the punishments doled out in school and the supposed reasons for these punishments. Patterns of miscommunication regarding school discipline policies and the inconsistent ways in which they are carried out have been witnessed or experienced firsthand by youth with unsettling frequency. As a counterpoint to this, youth value warm-demanders in institutional spaces. This is particularly true when it comes to school resource officers. If they must be present, and youth were ambivalent on this point, then they are best seen as community members, first, and disciplinarians second. Personal connections matter immensely in this sphere; this extends to teachers, and really any adults with whom youth come into contact.

And finally, youth are generally interested in addressing the inequities present in the juvenile justice system, which feels weighted against them and their peers. It does not, in its current instantiation, feel rehabilitative or 'safe' but punitive and often arbitrary in its application of force. The two groups asked:

- How can we break the juvenile justice system cycle?
- How can the community focus on the good (what's working) in the juvenile justice system?
- How can we build programs and organizations that help youth who are leaving the system?
- How can we get ahead of and change the problems that are caused by the juvenile justice system? (Trauma while incarcerated, for example)
- Why do juvenile justice probation officers give up on their clients?
- Why is the response of probation officers so harsh?
- What rules do probation officers have to follow/not follow?

Notably, across groups, there was an early shift away from *who* or *what* questions which might invite pointed fingers or overly simplistic explanations--a movement likely brought on by ART youth drawing attention to their maxim, "the people aren't the problem; the problem is the problem" at the start of the training session. As a result, these groups shifted their focus away from individual conflicts toward more systemic issues that they felt should be addressed by the community at large.

*Media Portrayal of Crime and Violence*

Youth readily grasp how those in power might use media to characterize related social issues as simply being "the way things are" when, in fact, conditions might well be made otherwise. They are able to perceive, keenly, how the dominoes of privilege, representation, and injustice are positioned to advantage some while disadvantaging others. Which is to say that there is a

recognition of complexity, but also an accompanying hope for change that stems from their understanding of the contingencies that undergird the current system. They wonder:

- How is media coverage and social media contributing to revenge killings, domestic violence, and other forms of crime?
- Does media affect the kill rate in Savannah?
- Does media make people look at each other differently?
- Is media always tracking you? Do people have a right to privacy?

From the final question we see youth beginning to broach the topic of metal detectors, security cameras, and other forms of surveillance that are used in coactive cycles to produce and reproduce images of danger and distrust. Youth also see pointed differences between the color and conditions of their communities and the portrayals of downtown they see advertised to tourists.

*Poverty*

The group focusing on poverty was interested in taking a wider analytical lens in order to understand what is keeping people in poverty from being effectively assisted by their communities. Some of the youth in the room had experienced poverty on a personal level. All had seen it. They listed streets to go down, bridges to look under, people to talk to.

Youth also worry about gentrification and see its marks all around them. They see this reflected in their peers but also in the ways in which adults in their immediate spheres talk about changes they see in neighborhoods (or don't see in neighborhoods). Conversation then steered toward root causes as youth become interested in first-hand accounts as a means to seek out the sinew that connects the bones of larger structural injustice through research. They wonder, for example:

- Why doesn't the community help people who suffer from poverty?
- How can communities help people in poverty?

From these questions we see youth are deeply concerned about the ways in which resources are maldistributed in the city of Savannah, particularly what public property gets fixed and how fast but also how public spaces are allocated and maintained in, for instance, minoritized neighborhoods vis a vis tourist areas. This is about equity for the youth who remain committed to the notion that fairness ought to reign in the distribution of resources.

As the time allotted came to an end, ART youth began to shore up their point of contact from each group by trading phone numbers. Forms were signed. Parents started to arrive. Big brothers and little sisters brought other responsibilities to the fore. It would be a month, at least, until everyone would have the chance to reconvene again.

*2nd Youth Summit*

Points of contact from the individual groups indicated to the ART youth that they would be coming to the 2nd youth summit with varying degrees of progress, while other groups would be attending for the first time and be new to the process entirely. As such, groups were split after a

greeting and joybringer. Some left the building to begin guided practice, walking and generating data through photo elicitation, participant observation, and youth-guided walking tours, while those groups who'd brought data stayed behind and began coding for themes.

Concerns generated through recall and conversation during the previous summit thus took on a more applied dimension. The group who generated data through photo elicitation began to drill down into the practical effects of gentrification on the neighborhood they walked through, particularly as they considered practical issues like parking, street lights, green spaces, sidewalks, and the presence of small businesses. Additionally, they considered the inherent pedagogy of the gentrified neighborhood they were walking through. They examined how the statues of Revolutionary War heroes centered in landscaped neighborhood squares surrounded by hourly parking meters communicated or taught people who passed through how this neighborhood functioned and for whom it existed. There were animated discussions about parks and sidewalks in disarray in sections of the city less visible to tourists and youth were attendant to the racial and socioeconomic implications of policies that differently maintained resources for people of color who are residents of the city, and the groups of mostly white people who come to visit it.

For the groups who stayed behind to analyze the data that had already been gathered, youth were eager to share the data they had collected--data which revealed the concerns and preoccupations of the youth as researchers but also highlighted practical examples of inequality in the justice system and in resource distribution throughout the community.

*Poverty and Access to Food Stamps, Subsidized Housing, and Other Public Services*

One group focused their research questions on how people in poverty had to fight in order to gain timely access to the social safety net. They reported the results of their interviews with nearly fifteen participants who identified as currently experiencing poverty or as having experienced poverty at some point. Their participants included family members and friends but also encompassed street interviews with members of Savannah's homeless population. The youth researchers' questions reflected their sense that poverty didn't have to be a permanent situation, but that the institutional structure created barriers to access of resources that might help those who were affected by poverty.

The questions that youth asked of their interviewers included:
- For how long have you experienced poverty?
- If you applied for help, how long did it take you to get food stamps or other help?
- What kind of assistance did you receive?
- What was the application process like to receive assistance?
- How does poverty influence your life?

As youth researchers began to analyze their data as a group, youth generated several emergent themes:
- *Access Inequality*--Several participants reported that they were denied assistance until they had children, which youth researchers interpreted as an unfair privileging (and possibly an encouragement) of parenthood. As one youth researcher pointed out, "It's sad that unless you have kids no one cares if you have a place to sleep or food to eat."

- *Time to Receive Assistance*--The length of time between application and receiving assistance is far too long to adequately provide a genuine safety net for those experiencing poverty. Youth noted that while some respondents received assistance within three to six months, other respondents reported never receiving assistance at all.
- *Communication from Agencies*--The assistance system is too difficult to navigate and

agency communication was spotty. Multiple respondents reported that they never heard back from the agencies to which they applied and were required to revisit agency offices multiple times to follow up on their applications.

From the data collected and the codes and themes that youth generated, youth communicated their desire to challenge and examine *systemic* issues that contributed to poverty. Even in instances where participants turned to blaming themselves for the poverty they experienced (one participant noted that they experienced poverty during a time when they were struggling with addictions) youth continuously turned their conversations about these data points to examine what *access to resources* might have meant for people who experienced poverty (with regards to the previous participant, for example, youth talked about what it might mean to someone struggling with addiction to have access to high quality addiction treatment centers and more readily available employment and education).

*Crime, Safety, and Policing*

The ART took the opportunity during the second summit meeting to generate and collect data about youth relationships with the city's police force. ART youth each led a focus group that asked city youth to consider how the Savannah police department could improve their approach with youth. Adult researchers were responsible for ethnographic notetaking during these conversations.

As youth shared their own experiences and understandings of the issues that underpin a deep distrust of police in communities of color, several themes were constructed by the focus groups:

- *Interactional awareness*--Youth consistently reported that in their interactions with police, police seemed unaware of or indifferent to the ways that their tone, choice of words, and physical stance might work to intimidate or alienate youth. "I want to feel safe with police," said one participant, "but they start yelling right away." In an ideal world, youth believe that police would be polite, tell them why they were stopped, and remain calm in their interactions with Savannah youth.
- *Accountability*--Youth want police to have sensible policies in place that dictate the use of force in escalating situations, but they also want there to be consequences when police misuse force, especially deadly force. They want police to learn how to use non-fatal force and techniques that deescalate situations. Additionally, youth want police to examine their practices around racial profiling and work to eliminate race-based bias within the force.
- *Representation*--Youth want the police force to mirror the racial and ethnic diversity of the communities they serve (although it is worth pointing out that several participants disagreed--one said, "It won't matter if you have more Black officers, any color they are, they'll shoot you.").

Once again, youth moved to viewing the data they created, collected, and analyzed with a systems focus. Although there were stories that highlighted individual police behaviors and practices, ART youth deftly turned the conversation away from individual shortcomings to focus on solutions to the underlying systemic problems within the police force. A conversation about a police officer using the "n-word" to address a youth became a discussion about how the police force could better train police to interact respectfully with the community and how individual police officers might best be held accountable for inappropriate interactions.

*3ʳᵈ Youth Summit*

The mere passing of time played a hand in how final themes took shape. Seasonal changes and the ebbs and flows of daily life inevitably came to effect what youth were able to focus on and how. It might easily have been the case, for instance, that the early focus on the institutional devaluation of school lunches waned by the third youth summit because it occurred in late August, when the new school year had not yet gotten back into full swing. On the other hand, Summer, a time when kids are most able to play and roam around on their bikes, had just ended, and a greater emphasis on neighborhood aesthetics, safety, and other boundary-related issues may well have surfaced as a result. Such sensitivities to change, to new homes, new feelings, and other ephemera—rather than signifying caprice or the mere vagaries of adolescence—are part and parcel of why youth voices matter. Indeed, these careful, immediate, entirely present attenuations yield insights that busy adults frequently bypass.

Themes were also inevitably shaped by attendance. Legitimate factors such as then-category 4 hurricane Dorian brewing a few days offshore affected how many were able to attend and carry on previous conversations. While there were close to forty youth participants at the first youth summit in the Spring, a dozen or so were able to make it to the third and final gathering in late August. Many of those unable to make it in person, however, sent what they had collected via email or else used those who could attend as couriers for their data.

Most importantly, final themes coalesced around the data that youth collected. Hard and fast images, walks, and shared observations produced concrete discussion points upon which critical commentaries were built. Youth shared photos, delivered research, and engaged each other in earnest and sometimes hard conversations especially around racial injustice. Topics of inquiry from previous summits were considered in light of circumstances and the data collected and eventually culminated into the four focal areas we touch on below. After several hours of sharing, listening, and dialogue, the youth all received sticky notes and wrote down the issue they most wanted to draw attention to. Comparing these sticky notes to the big questions groups generated on parchment paper back in March, we see a marked shift away from investigative instincts toward a critical, declarative vigor regarding youth's lived experience. We loosely categorize these statements under the four themes that emerged below in an effort to preserve, verbatim, the words of these youth—words we, and future youth-researchers, might also conceive of as data in continuing to work toward improving the lives of all who call Savannah home.

*Safety*

Data youth collected through photo-voice brought a strong concern for safety to the fore, particularly the safety of those younger than them, kids their younger brothers' and sisters' ages, who they feared might trip over potholes, cut themselves on sharp uncollected yard trimmings, or fall into the open maw of sewers captured in their photographs.

Research conducted into the historical conditions of criminal justice reform also yielded damning indictments regarding the ongoing legacy of racial prejudice and reactionary politics in the current system. This research was then corroborated by others in the room who knew people who had been neglected or treated unfairly while incarcerated. The youth wrote:

- I see that the justice system is corrupt. I learned that kids are being punished, not taught, that what they do is wrong. They grow up and don't see anything wrong. They're not getting help, they're being oppressed.
- It is hard for me to not see something from before that wasn't already there.

*Aesthetics and community maintenance*

Youth's conversation about the kinds of places where they—and by extension, their families—would like to be able to grow up quickly moved beyond illustrations of the "good stuff" and the "bad stuff" into a discussion about impression management in general. Worries about what boarded up houses and wet couches left molding on the curbside signify to community members and prospective homebuyers brought on candid discussion surrounding who and what city services are most attentive toward. Answers were frank: powers in the city care about tourism, often at the expense of local minoritized populations. Youth put forth that:

- City services don't support certain groups.
- Savannah for tourists is not Savannah for locals.
- I didn't think about how other houses affect the value of each other.
- Savannah is covered by a beautiful wallpaper, but behind it hide skeletons.

*Gentrification and Segregation*

As more and more youth chimed in, a geographic angle developed. Understandings of learned boundaries became apparent as youth began comparing different parts of the city with ease, fully aware of how each was perceived and who may or may not be welcome there. It was abundantly clear to them that some sections of the city were thriving while other sections were deteriorating, and that these demarcations were directly tied to racial segregation most especially in housing. Youth submit that:

- People are moving from certain neighborhoods based on the environmental conditions
- White flight continues to happen in a cycle of gentrification.
- There are more people that are renting houses instead of buying them.
- How deep racial prejudice in Sav. Affect the actions today (housing).
- We are unable to talk about race without feeling like we have to sugarcoat it.

*Maldistribution of resources throughout the city*

Finally, youth call attention to inequitable distribution patterns of the cities resources. We have here a city whose resources are apportioned along stark racial and economic lines, where bus lines run direct between institutional spaces and wealthy neighborhoods, and the width or even presence of sidewalks in a neighborhood all too predictably discloses the means and privilege of those who call it home. Confronting these issues, youth write:

- Savannah needs to focus on the community that needs help instead of the community that already has help.
- I think they should treat every community with the same respect
- The same but not treated equally.
- Certain communities are being treated unfairly.
- Where is all the money going to when we pay taxes?

**Takeaways**

The first thing to say is that many of the early categories generated during the first summit clearly live on in the final themes that took shape. Structural relationships between crime and safety, poverty and maldistribution of resources, and media portrayals and community aesthetics, for instance, can all be readily identified. It never suffices to frame these concerns in total isolation, of course, and indeed many of the questions and concerns that youth presented could also have easily fit under two or more categories. Disaggregating them for the purposes of critical analysis, however, proved a worthwhile means to exhibit the interactive ways they feed into and reinforce one another.

We also see gradual shifts from remotely-framed concerns such as poverty, media, and crime, to more homegrown, experiential concerns regarding neighborhood boundaries and personal safety. Successful research processes necessarily involve some sort of winnowing effort. And we see that here as youth began to conceive of their everyday lived experience as valuable substance for analysis. The more we begin to frame the everyday as meaningful, the more we begin to cast the ins and outs of experience as viable and worthwhile—as data—the more young people will begin to see themselves as having something to say to which people in power might listen.

All this is to say that youth, in general, undervalue their contributions to research and public policy. This is a learned reaction and adults, wanting to think about structural change, have to undo a great deal of learned helplessness from kids who aren't used to being listened to when it comes to 'serious' or adult conversations. If we want youth to thrive, then we need to help them lead. And we help them lead by building infrastructure around them so that they are confident in their knowledge. This involves building a culture of care and accountability, creating a space for youth expertise to manifest itself, and scaffolding through practical and applied experience.

**Building Capacity for Youth Research(ers)**

To the final point, then, of how youth researchers received scaffolded support as they moved through the research process, which might serve as a road map for other community groups looking to engage in youth-led research projects. We consider here, briefly, the ways in which the ART leadership team was scaffolded in the process of becoming YPAR experts. We then turn to a

consideration of how the ART, who was tasked with creating a research community made up of disparate and diverse youth community groups, scaffolded that research process for other youth.

The ART, comprising five youth, first completed their own research process: collecting and analyzing data about the school to prison pipeline from a variety of sources. Because this was the ART's first year, the youth spent a great deal of time talking about *what* might count as data (they were very drawn to statistics and wanted to collect numbers; adult researchers gently pushed them to consider the amount of knowledge that was embedded in their own and others' stories and experiences), how they might collect data, and *how* they might look at data in a systematic way. As we examined what moves the adult leaders of the ART made as they built the capacity of youth researchers, several themes stood out as particularly important or as repetitive refrains:

- *Money and Value*--One of the most important ways in which adults communicated to
the ART that their research mattered was monetary: youth were provided with a stipend to participate in the ART. The payment of youth communicated to them the value of their work and time, and positioned their research as professional.

- *Norms, Community, and Culture*--Adult leaders of the ART worked hard to establish the importance of norms and community building in creating a culture where research was possible. Meetings began with multiple routines that built community: "joybringers" or short improv games, an activist moment where youth watched a short Youtube video on a researcher or activist whose work was interesting or powerful, and with a DJ--usually one of the youth--who played some music to bring the energy up. These norms and culture-building activities laid the groundwork for some of the most interesting moments in ART meetings, where youth asserted their desire to make decisions for themselves and refused the (very well-meaning) help of the adults.

- *Trusting youth*--Adult leaders consistently communicated to youth that they were responsible, experts, and self-regulators. In short, they trusted youth to do interesting work and tackle issues that youth wanted to talk about, even if it led to discomfort. Youth created codes and themes, pointed out patterns of thought as they examined data and while adults asked probing questions, the final analyses were left to youth.

- *Building individual capacity*--While adult leaders trusted the youth ART members to run the summits, they also put in place careful guidelines to help them be successful. Agendas were painstakingly planned by the whole team; individual assignments were built to cater to individual strengths. For example, one ART member expressed his hesitation about running a discussion about the research process, and an adult asked him instead to run a joybringer and work as a sort of usher, helping latecomers find their tables and answering questions. In preparation for the second summit, they provided even more support for this particular youth by giving him multiple opportunities to practice what he would say as he led a focus group in a discussion about policing. He practiced how he might respond to certain possible answers from peers and what questions might lead to deeper analysis from other youth. This attention to individual capacity was key to the success of the ART.

This careful scaffolding for ART members paid dividends in the research summits, as ART members followed many of the same principles for research engagement that had built their own capacity with other youth. The ART worked in the summits as research trainers for other youth. We saw similar repetitive refrains in the stance the ART took towards their peer researchers.

12

- *Money and Value*--Youth who participated in the summit were paid for their time and

participation, just as the ART was. Youth participants were delighted to receive compensation for their contributions and many of them collected meaningful data independently. We posit that this approach was encouraged by the remuneration youth earned for their participation.

- *Norms, Community, and Culture*--The ART structured the community summits to establish the norms and sense of community and culture that was so vital to their own development as researchers. Youth planned joybringers, set norms, and opened the floor to other youth for sometimes difficult discussions--trusting that the community and culture they had built would sustain those moments of discomfort.

- *Trusting youth*--ART members equally positioned other youth as capable researchers.

Some of this was their own positioning as peers who had already successfully completed a

cycle of data collection and analysis, a positioning which served to demystify the idea that research is intimidating (or disconnected and meaningless) and researchers are mystical beings who are somehow smarter than everyone else. ART members walked other youth through the process of identifying a research question, considering what data will need to be collected to answer that research question, and how that data might be analyzed to make sense of patterns and recurring concepts with a strong expectation that other youth could do this too, if they just had the right training.

- *Building individual capacity*--In their planning, ART members showed a strong sense

that youth would need careful scaffolding to build their capacity to research. One ART member stated at a planning meeting: "I want to support them as they start researching [so I want to contact them every week]. Like, we're just going to throw them out there? I think we need to help them figure out how to interview." The planning and scaffolding that the ART developed for youth to learn about research questions, data collection and analysis indicated a strong sense on the part of the ART that other youth were highly capable of taking on the persona of researchers, they just needed the kind of support that the ART had received from their own adult leaders.

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