"WE DON'T CALL IT BRISTOL PARK": ENGAGING AFRICAN
AMERICAN YOUTH IN URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD
REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This youth participatory action research project was conceptualized in an effort to include the voices of youth residents in a process of neighborhood redevelopment underway in their community. Four youth collaborators partnered with a graduate student and an adult community partner to design, implement, and disseminate results from a study of youth perspectives concerning the Bristol Park neighborhood redevelopment for use in the City of Champaign's master plan for the neighborhood. As low income teens of color, participants may face social, cultural, developmental, economic, and systemic barriers to civic participation in neighborhood redevelopment, and their absence from the process was apparent locally. An innovative method of a youth "lock-in" with a late night basketball competition and talent show was used to attract youth participants and engage them in surveys and discussions regarding the redevelopment, which were analyzed and included in the Bristol Park neighborhood master plan. The goals of this study were to 1) learn effective strategies for gaining civic participation from African American youth in the context of an urban neighborhood redevelopment, and 2) assess youths' views of the strengths and needs of a community undergoing redevelopment, including their concerns regarding redevelopment. We learned that youth tended to be uninformed about the redevelopment and were more likely to participate in the redevelopment planning when they were provided with information about the redevelopment, given a youth-centered and youth-led context in which to participate, and received authentic support from both adult partners and city staff. Youth's primary interests were in increasing safety, recreation, and housing quality, while preserving social networks and nostalgic aspects of the physical structure of the neighborhood. Implications for inclusion of youth perspectives in urban neighborhood redevelopment are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Youth engagement in neighborhood redevelopment can promote positive personal and political identity development (Yates & Youniss, 1996; Yates & Youniss, 1998) and enhance sense of community (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999; Evans, 2007). Engaging youth this way can be especially important for low income youth of color who have historically been marginalized and subject to dominant cultural narratives that purport their weakness, idleness, and lack of capacity to contribute meaningfully to society (Checkoway, 1996; Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Rappaport, 2000). Youth engagement in neighborhood redevelopment contributes to a positive counter-narrative and enriches the process of community change for the youth, their adult partners, and the larger community affected (Checkoway, 1998). Inviting youth participation acknowledges the capacity of young people to address complex social issues and produce social change.

In the sections that follow, I first detail the benefits of youth engagement in neighborhood redevelopment planning to provide a rationale for youth involvement. Next, I will describe barriers preventing youth participation in neighborhood redevelopment planning to examine the challenges that need to be overcome in order to involve youth. I will then discuss key ingredients that have been identified for fostering youth engagement in authentic and influential ways. Following this discussion, I will provide examples of projects that have used such strategies to effectively engage youth in neighborhood redevelopment planning. I will conclude with a summary that reflects on what we have learned about involving youth in neighborhood redevelopment planning and where there are still gaps in our understanding, introducing the present study.

Benefits of Youth Engagement

      The process of engagement in neighborhood redevelopment planning includes a number of benefits for youth in multiple domains of their lives, functioning, and development (Head, 2011). Their engagement increases their presence and voice in institutions and can provide a vehicle for active citizenship (Checkoway, 1998). This process of engaging in active citizenship can increase youths' sense of social responsibility (Evans, 2007) and prepare them for leadership in adulthood (Newsome & Scalera, 2001), in part because it can increase their self-confidence and beliefs about their own capabilities for effecting changes in matters that they view as critical. Moreover, it can increase the knowledge, exposure, and competencies about politics, society, their community, and themselves needed for positive personal and sociopolitical development (Newsome & Scalera, 2001; Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005). Specifically, youth can gain exposure to educational and career opportunities (Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005) and can become connected with community leaders (Newsome & Scalera, 2001). They can build social skills through interaction and communication across lines of age, gender, race and other socio-demographic factors (Checkoway, 1998). They can additionally hone fundamental academic and job skills through gaining responsibilities and learning skills in critical thinking, reading, writing, and presenting their ideas to multiple audiences (Checkoway, 1998; McKoy & Vincent, 2007). Altogether, youth benefit from obtaining and practicing multiple skills and competencies provided by involvement in neighborhood redevelopment planning that can contribute to their positive development.

      Although the literature on the benefits of youth engagement in neighborhood redevelopment focuses more on advantages for the youth involved, agencies also benefit from the inclusion of youth in the planning process. Youth offer new and innovative perspectives,

provide community services, generate support for implementing services, create energetic and

inspiring work environments, and heighten the focus on the agency's mission (Checkoway,

1998; Zeldin, et al, 2000; Newsome & Scalera, 2001). Thus, involving youth in the process of

neighborhood redevelopment planning enriches the process for multiple stakeholders involved.

Barriers to Youth Engagement

Despite the potential benefits of youth civic participation at the local level, a number of

barriers operate to marginalize youth from local political processes. Although youth have had a

long history of involvement in political action, civic engagement at the municipal level has most

often occurred among adult residents, and strategies explicitly designed to place youth in local

civic leadership roles are less frequently used (Checkoway, Allison & Montoya, 2005).

Neighborhood development organizations have preferred partnership with for-profit commercial

and not-for-profit institutions that have the financial resources and social power to build support

for implementing their neighborhood development plans—resources that youth typically cannot

offer (Checkoway, 1996; Checkoway, 1998). The limited financial resources of youth limit both

their appeal as partners in the process as well as their ability to participate. Youth may not be

able to afford transportation to and from formal meetings or may need to work after school,

leaving little time for political participation. The structure of youths' lives also yield several

opportunities for scheduling conflicts beyond just work, as they may have school and family

commitments that take precedence (Lambarth, 2002). Local political agencies do not tend to

cater to youths' schedules or unique needs. Political forums are most often designed to

accommodate adults in multiple ways. They often meet at times and in locations that are more

accessible to adults. Accordingly, they often use recruitment methods and meeting structures that

are more accessible to adults. This includes using highly structured settings and dialogue and

advertising through mediums underutilized by youth such as email, mail-in surveys, and flyers mailed to resident homes. Fostering youth engagement requires use of non-traditional models, due to developmental, social, and cultural factors which influence youth individually and as a community distinct from the adult population (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). However, attitudinal barriers can prevent adults from altering the methods and group culture they are most comfortable with and readjusting their time and resources in order to invite and better accommodate youth, who are not perceived as key stakeholders (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999). For example, pilot projects to include youth participation in urban planning in four European countries showed positive results in the quality of planning and creativity of ideas produced by youth, but officials still displayed hesitancy toward replacing their top-down approach with a participatory model including non-"expert" youth collaborators (Horelli & Kaaja, 2002). This phenomenon has been termed "adultism," a bias toward the knowledge and power of adults to act upon the presumed less capable youth without their permission (Checkoway, 1996). Youth have noted important challenges to participation wrought by this imbalance of power between them and adults and the correlates of this phenomenon—silencing, alienation, lack of support and lack of respect (Newsome & Scalera, 2001). For some youth, such treatment and attitudes in society lead to an "internalized adultism," believing that adults should maintain their power and unquestioned influence over their lives, which may further serve to hamper their efforts (Checkoway, 2011). In sum, inclusion of youth in the process of neighborhood redevelopment planning requires intentional shifts in the process to accommodate youths' needs, and the reluctance toward such shifts can reflect discriminatory attitudes of adults.

Youth participation is further impacted by socio-demographic variables that influence the youths' social status and power (Flanagan et al, 1998; Fine et al, 2004; Checkoway, 2011).

Youth with multiple marginalized identities such as youth of color and low income youth tend to be more isolated from civic matters than their peers (Fine et al, 2004; Checkoway, 2011). It is equally true of adult civic engagement that participants are often not representative of the population for which decisions are being made (Checkoway, 1985; Dee, 2004; Glaeser, Ponzetto, & Shleifer, 2007; Farmer & Piotrkowski, 2009). Income, education, and occupational status positively correlate with political participation (Checkoway, 1985; Dee, 2004; Glaeser, Ponzetto, & Shleifer, 2007; Checkoway, 2011; Levin-Waldman, 2013). Youth from privileged backgrounds are more often aware of social issues, often due to more adequate education, books, television, or other opportunities for exposure and resources to explore broader societal issues critically in their classrooms, extracurricular programs, and homes (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999; Fine et, 2004). Less privileged youth more often lack access to such information and opportunities and face financial barriers to participation (Fine et al, 2004; Lambarth, 2002). Ironically, youth from low income backgrounds may have the most to contribute to community planning due to their personal experiences and observations of needed change in their communities and schools (Evans, 2007), and through a strong history of local activism, have proven to be highly motivated and invested in creating positive changes in these areas (Checkoway, 2013). Youth from low income backgrounds, although less represented in formal political processes, tend to organize around issues that matter to them such as school and neighborhood improvement in areas lacking resources (Checkoway, 2011). Increasingly, data is being gathered about the efforts of low income youth of color, but generally the literature on youth civic engagement focuses on middle class, White youth (Checkoway, 2011; Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). Thus, low income youth and youth of color face additional barriers to civic

engagement and less attention is paid to these youth in both the practice and study of youth participation in neighborhood redevelopment planning.

Key Ingredients for Effective Youth Engagement

Researchers focused on youth civic leadership have identified key ingredients for promoting effective engagement of youth in neighborhood redevelopment planning. First, it is necessary to define what is meant by effective engagement. Here I define effective engagement as engagement that is authentic and influential and that addresses the potential barriers to youth involvement and promotes the potential positive outcomes of youth involvement outlined in the sections above. McKoy and Vincent (2007) state that a project that fosters "authentic engagement," as opposed to a "simulation or academic exercise," allows for real-world skills and competencies to develop in youth and promotes internalization of the belief in a youth's ability to effect real-world change in their community. Similarly, Mullahey, Susskind, and Checkoway (1999) describe "influential" youth participation as occurring when: "1. actions aim to intervene in existing conditions, 2. involvement is part of the public dialog and decision making, and 3. engagement is influential and changes are significant." These concepts can be linked to Roger A. Hart's youth ladder of participation model, where authentic, influential youth engagement is occurring at the top rungs of the ladder, which include "child-initiated, shared decisions with adults," "child-initiated and directed," "adult-initiated, shared decisions with children," "consulted and informed," and "assigned but informed," in descending order (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999). In this top portion of the ladder, youth are experiencing varying degrees of control and influence in their partnership with adults. The recommendation is that agencies provide the opportunity for youth participation at any of these levels, depending on where the youth feel comfortable. "Assigned but informed" allows youth to examine and develop

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ownership of a project that was initiated by adults. "Consulted and informed" provides youth with the opportunity to be consulted in an adult-initiated project and have their feedback used to influence the process. "Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children" is the first rung that begins to offer some decision-making power to youth. This rung involves youth more holistically in the process so that, as McKoy and Vincent (2007) highlight, they may learn real-world skills and competencies such as how and why certain technical or practical decisions must be made. "Child-initiated and directed" allows youth to take control of the process and requires great commitment, focus, and organization on the part of youth. Similar maturity is required from the highest rung, "child-initiated, shared decisions with adults." In this rung, youth are able to collaborate with adults in a way that enhances their process and does not challenge their position of power and ownership over the process. The bottom portion of Hart's ladder represents the opposite of authentic, influential engagement. At these levels, youth involvement is more simulated and does not include real participation in the process. In descending order these rungs are "tokenism," "decoration," and "manipulation." "Manipulation" involves adults using youth involvement as a tool to disseminate the messages of adults. Next, "decoration" refers to adults getting youth to advocate for an issue without informing the youth about the issue or involving them in the planning process for addressing it. Finally, the most common rung in which most initiatives are found is the next rung of "tokenism," which occurs when youth participate as representatives for young people in a symbolic manner rather than in way that genuinely involves them and incorporates their perspective (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999; McKoy & Vincent, 2007). On this rung, youth may be offered partnership without real power, and indeed, youth participation in neighborhood matters has happened without the intention of empowerment (Checkoway, 1998). Youth may be placed on committees and asked to attend

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meetings for the purpose of upholding an image of collaboration and building support for an agenda set by adults without the expectation that the youth collaborators will have any real influence over key decisions (Checkoway, 1998; Checkoway, 2011). Hart's ladder provides a framework for understanding the degrees of authenticity and influence of youth that projects may use in their strategies for involving youth. Effective youth engagement is engagement that places youth high on Hart's ladder, conferring real power to youth, and facilitating positive outcomes from their engagement for both the youth and the planning process.

Effective youth engagement in neighborhood redevelopment planning can begin with how youth collaborators are selected. Selecting youth for their participation based on their interests and abilities has shown positive results in sustaining their commitment and productivity (Lambarth, 2002). Researchers have also found that two tends to be better than one when engaging youth in political settings (Justinianno & Scherer, 2001; Newsome & Scalera, 2001). Recruiting at least two youth collaborators increases the likelihood that the setting will become a safe space for youth to assert their voices and helps protect against tokenism of youth (Justinianno & Scherer, 2001; Newsome & Scalera, 2001). Therefore, selecting particular youth in an intentional manner is a key first step for fostering effective youth engagement.

Once youth collaborators have been selected, providing information and orientation to their roles has been noted as particularly essential (Lambarth, 2002; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008). One of the most common barriers to youth participation is lack of training and preparation for participation and lack of a shared understanding of their role and expectations of them when they are included as partners in political decision-making (Lambarth, 2002). Adults can facilitate youths' process of adapting to and succeeding in their new role by empowering them with information to be effective in this role.

A related key ingredient is mentorship (Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008). A mentor providing support, role clarification, and information about what to expect helps prepare youth to be effective in their new leadership role (Justinianno & Scherer, 2001; Lambarth, 2002; Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008). Not only mentorship from adults, but also peer mentorship can be used to cultivate a supportive and encouraging environment for youth (Lambarth, 2002; Checkoway, 2011). In fact, youth civic leaders have reported the desire to connect with other youth involved in similar work across the nation (Lambarth, 2002). Mentorship can help scaffold youth in their roles in supportive and encouraging ways that promote their sustained engagement and influence over the planning process.

Training is of critical importance not only for the youth, but for adult collaborators as well (Checkoway, 1996; Lambarth, 2002). To combat adultism and cultivate a setting that promotes authentic and influential youth participation, adult collaborators require instruction in the relevance of youth involvement and training in models of positive youth-adult partnership (Y-AP) (Checkoway, 1996; Lambarth, 2002). It is important for projects to consider that youth are not the only partners that will require orientation to their new role. Adults will require orientation to their new role as well, which involves sharing power with youth, a practice that will likely feel unfamiliar.

Once selection and training have occurred, youth and adults will begin their partnership, and over the course of this partnership, their attitudes toward each other will be critical to the outcome of effective engagement. Adult partners foster effective youth engagement when they maintain positive attitudes toward the youth and high expectations of them (Checkoway, 1996; Camino, 2000; Lambarth, 2002). Mutual respect between adults and youth has also been

demonstrated to promote successful collaboration (Checkoway, 1996; Camino, 2000; Lambarth, 2002). Collaboration should provide opportunities to build positive relationships and social connections among adult and youth collaborators (Checkoway, 1996; Camino, 2000; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008). Youth have reported relationship building to be one of the most enriching components of the participation process, enhancing their desire to remain involved (Camino, 2000; Lambarth, 2002; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008). Thus, adult and youth partners must maintain a collaborative, caring, and respectful attitude toward each other in order to build the positive intergenerational working relationships that characterize effective youth engagement in neighborhood redevelopment planning.

In addition to fostering a positive social climate, the organizational structure should similarly reflect openness to incorporating youth into the process. Meetings should be structured in a way that allows flexibility for youth involvement, including times and locations that work for youth and providing transportation and other means of ensuring ease of involvement and minimizing the financial burden of participation on youth (Lambarth, 2002). These strategies bring youth to the table, and once they are there, the meeting structure should provide similar accessibility for youth. Adult collaborators should offer youth-friendly methods of learning and engaging with meeting content. In sum, adults can facilitate the authentic inclusion of youth through altering the structures of meeting spaces and the process of entering such spaces in a way that accounts for youths' unique developmental, social, and financial needs.

As youth work with adults on real issues facing their communities, it is important that they feel like they are making a real difference (Lambarth, 2002). Adults can promote this feeling in youth by allowing youth time to debrief about the process (Checkoway, 1996; Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004; Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005). Adults can

take time to meta-analyze the work they are doing with the youth, reflecting on how it has impacted their community and themselves and providing encouragement about the quality of youths' contributions (Checkoway, 1996; Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005). When youth see and hear about the influence of their involvement on a process that matters to them, it enhances their willingness to participate and the quality of their engagement.

Finally, it is encouraging for youth to gain some recognition for their work (McLaughlin, 1999) and have official roles that have been institutionalized (Lambarth, 2002; Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005) and that involve them in all steps of the political process from policy conception to evaluation (Lambarth, 2002). Youth tend to respond well to such acknowledgement and may internalize the role of an influential community leader. Overall, this section has highlighted the existence of explicit strategies needed at each stage of the youth engagement process to both initiate and sustain effective engagement of youth over time.

Examples of Effective Youth Engagement

Although youth remain underrepresented in neighborhood redevelopment planning processes, strategies for including youth are growing in use, and examples of youth participation in neighborhood redevelopment planning reflect a number of the aforementioned key ingredients for achieving effective youth engagement. McKoy and Vincent (2007) document the Y-PLAN (Youth—Plan, Learn, Act, Now!) model developed in 2000 in West Oakland, California. This school-based model partners graduate students, high school students, government agencies, housing developers, and other community partners to engage in planning for neighborhood redevelopment (McKoy & Vincent, 2007). Y-PLAN's effectiveness rests on cultivating a process that is understandable, engaging, and important for youth and that their school believes is educational and aligned with classroom goals (McKoy & Vincent, 2007). Graduate student

mentors lead youth in ten to twelve weeks of community planning, which concludes with the students publicly presenting their proposals for the redeveloped neighborhood in Oakland City Hall and other venues (McKoy & Vincent, 2007). To increase youth understanding of the development planning process, early in the process students receive consultation regarding land usage and at times guided tours of target areas from private developers, designers, architects, and engineers (McKoy & Vincent, 2007). Y-PLAN thus provides the training, real-world problem solving, and shared decision-making that characterizes effective youth engagement.

Adequate training was similarly a key to the success of another initiative in Honolulu, Hawaii where youth were invited along with their parents and teachers to participate in focus groups to gather their suggestions for land-use planning, which were incorporated into the city's redevelopment recommendations (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999). Participants were informed of public forums where they could learn about current conditions to inform their suggestions. This information allowed them to understand the history of the planning process and the impact it would have, which allowed them to provide educated opinions on these complex matters.

A project in 1990 in Toronto provides an example of youth-friendly methods of engagement. Eight thousand youth grades one to thirteen were engaged in developing the plan for the central area of the city (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999). Their planning activities consisted of 1) a student conference on urban issues, 2) a workshop with teams modeling the new neighborhood using Lego blocks, 3) a survey to identify existing structures and places in the area that they found appealing, 4) a showcase of artwork, essays, poems, murals, and city models, and 5) a role-play of drafting redevelopment plans followed by preparation of official plans (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999). The rich feedback

gained from Toronto's youth affirmed the value of including young people in the planning process and the effectiveness of using creative youth-centered strategies to achieve positive outcomes from youth involvement (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999).

The same year in Loveland, Colorado, an initiative called Agenda for the 90's and Beyond found similar success with youth-friendly engagement strategies. This project additionally conferred power to youth through appointing a student to their steering committee, which developed a task force for student involvement that spearheaded a large scale survey effort of every high school in the city to gain youth perspectives about their vision for the future of Loveland (Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999). Creative youth-friendly engagement strategies included a ninth grade class developing a talk show for teens to discuss relevant community issues, which created awareness about young people's ideas regarding the redevelopment. This method created an accessible outlet for youth voice that allowed their voice to be heard and to influence the planning process.

In Boston, youth leadership and peer mentorship were key aspects of the Dudley Square neighborhood redevelopment plan (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). In partnership with city government, youth collaborators developed a youth committee on the city's board, in which they developed a layout for a new community center (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). Youths' creation of their own space enhanced their control of the process while providing their consultation to adults.

Elsewhere, youth have been paired with adult mentors who have guided them through community asset and deficit mapping, an important initial step of neighborhood redevelopment planning, through photovoice and other participatory field research methods that have critically engaged them in the redevelopment planning process (Wang, 2006; Santilli et. al, 2011). Youth were led by adults in the field who provided the necessary support and instruction to accomplish

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projects traditionally reserved for adults. These examples illustrate how innovative strategies can be used to overcome the barriers to youth involvement and combine key ingredients for effective engagement to produce positive results.

The Value of Youth Perspectives

Ferguson (2001) describes the different "sociological eye" through which youth view their communities, allowing them to identify issues invisible to adults. Young people may often not have political experience or training, but they are "experts" on the topic of youth and the nature of their lives and relationships within their own community (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004; Checkoway, 2011). As McKoy and Vincent (2007) point out, "…youth may not have an understanding of design principles and the skills to use them, [but] they do have deep levels of understanding about who uses the spaces in their environment at different times of the day and why." Studies of youth participation in urban neighborhood redevelopment have found that youth are just as able and willing to provide their input in community evaluation and planning as adults, and their perspectives add unique value to these processes for the reasons described above (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004). The input youth provide as partners in neighborhood redevelopment planning has matched the concerns of adult community members and at the same time provided distinctive perspectives not attended to by adults. Arguably, either scenario adds valuable information to neighborhood redevelopment plans. When youth and adults share a belief about the critical strengths and needs in a community, it provides strong support for the need to carefully attend to these structures in the redevelopment plan. In Lemon Grove, California, the city found that plans developed by youth were remarkably similar to policies they intended to adopt, further solidifying their importance (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999). Youth and adults shared the same primary goals of structural improvements,

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increasing housing proximity to schools and recreational facilities, improving transportation and increasing safety and cleanliness (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999). When youth input yields additional information beyond what adults have identified as critical, it adds important youth-specific needs and values that adults may have missed or minimized in the redevelopment plan (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004). In the scenario in which youth and adults may disagree about a particular strength or need of the community, it may precipitate intergenerational dialogue, fostering collaboration and reconciliation, and provide an opportunity to explore the issue with greater nuance. In an assessment of after-school needs, significant differences were found between youth and parent survey responses in a study documented by Sanderson and Richards (2010). An examination of these differences allowed for an approach that attended to the needs of both youth and parents through balancing academic, recreational, and social programming (Sanderson & Richards, 2010).

Youth have identified a number of strengths and needs in their communities in contribution to neighborhood planning efforts. Among some of the projects referenced in this discussion, nine broad categories surface from the youth input documented—1) Arts and recreation, 2) cultural preservation, 3) transportation, 4) economic stimulation, 5) housing improvement, 6) neighborhood beautification, 7) community services, 8) community meeting or gathering spaces, and 9) safety.

In the first area of arts and recreation, youth have called for facilities for activities they enjoy, such as skateboarding in San Francisco (Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005). They have recommended theatres for films and concerts (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999) and photography exhibitions (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007) to showcase the arts in their community. Teens have shown concern for their own recreational desires, such as later hours of operation for

recreational facilities (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999) as well as for the needs of younger children, such as outdoor play areas, and those of adults, such as quiet shaded sitting areas where they can sit while supervising their young children (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007).

In the second area of cultural preservation, youth have been highly motivated to showcase the rich histories and culture their neighborhoods have to offer. In West Oakland's Y-PLAN project, youth developed plans for a "poetry wall" in the city's most problematic park to deflect the focus from youth violence in the area to youth vibrancy and creativity (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007). On the adjacent ground would lay cemented images of maps filled with descriptions of significant historic events from the area, some gathered through oral history with youths' families (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007). Other youth proposals included a space to exhibit local youth art and a rail tunnel with facts about the station marked throughout the path (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007). In Honolulu, youth similarly desired historic landmark preservation, while Lemon Grove youth suggested a history center in their community (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999). Interestingly, youth have expressed desires for a balance of both cultural preservation and the increase of multiculturalism in their neighborhoods (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999). Youth in Y-PLAN expressed a great deal of ambivalence about redevelopment of their neighborhood, as they attributed increased safety to the displacement of some people, yet felt nervous that redevelopment would lead to the displacement of the entire community, threatening a loss of the culture and people that embodied the community's strengths that they most cherished (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007).

Regarding the third category, transportation, youth have recommended more options, safer options, and greater accessibility of transportation options. Toward these ends, they have suggested more frequent bus stops, safer bus procedures for children and the elderly, and a van

service to transport children home from community centers at night (Mullahey, Susskind &

Checkoway, 1999). Youth have proposed the development of bike paths and more bike racks,

and they have advocated for more affordable rail services and greater proximity of rail stations to

homes, workplaces, and shopping areas (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999).

Fourth, young people have shown concern for the economic growth of their community.

They have promoted community support of local businesses (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007), the

construction of shopping centers (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999), the provision of

career services (Mckoy & Vincent, 2007), and the creation of jobs (Mullahey, Susskind &

Checkoway, 1999). Related is the fifth category of housing improvement. Youth have presented

their interest in seeing affordable quality housing near stores and businesses in their

neighborhoods (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999). In Seattle, adults and youth both

shared an interest in avoiding overcrowding through maintaining their single-family housing

design (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999).

Also related to housing improvement is youths' desire for overall neighborhood

beautification, the sixth focal area. Youth have desired improvements in the visual appeal of both

housing structures and their surrounding environments. Regarding the latter, they have suggested

community gardens, fountains, and neighborhood beautification projects (Mullahey, Susskind &

Checkoway, 1999; Mckoy & Vincent, 2007).

Seventh, youths' community service requests have included childcare centers and aging

services, and eighth, their desires for community meeting spaces have included youth centers,

community centers, and central town hubs (Mullahey, Susskind & Checkoway, 1999; Mckoy &

Vincent, 2007). Finally, youth have generated a broad range of safety concerns to be addressed

in their neighborhoods, including crime, factory pollution, and transportation security (Mullahey,

Susskind & Checkoway, 1999). In sum, youth provide an array of suggestions for improving communities that demonstrate their sensibilities about a number of relevant issues to neighborhood redevelopment planning and that add both shared value and unique value to the contributions of adults.

Summary and Introduction of Present Study

The noteworthy examples of youth engagement in neighborhood redevelopment provide rich information about both the process of engaging youth effectively and the neighborhood planning outcomes resulting from such authentic, influential youth involvement. Researchers and city planners have learned that both youth and agencies benefit from the process in a number of ways and that youth perspectives add value to the process due to youths' unique social location in the community. At the same time, youth participation in neighborhood redevelopment, and municipal policy more broadly, remains largely underrepresented and understudied (Checkoway, Allison & Montoya, 2005). Rather, literature focused on youth attitudes and behavior is disproportionately deficit-based, less often reporting such ways in which the unique strengths and contributions of youth, even those that have been involved in negative behaviors or the justice system, can enrich community functioning and the political process (Checkoway, Allison & Montoya, 2005). Our understanding of authentic, influential youth participation is further limited by an overreliance on "back-end" youth participation, such as community service and political advocacy, which engage youth only in the implementation of redevelopment plans set by adults, and underutilization of youth in the "front-end" community evaluation research and theorizing for neighborhood planning initiatives (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2003; Checkoway, 1998). In their review of the literature, Jacquez, Vaughn, and Wagner (2013) found that as community based participatory research (CBPR) has grown rapidly as an approach to

community research with adults, youth partnerships in CBPR remain underrepresented. Finally, more initiatives are needed that engage youth in a way that *they choose* to participate—a way that supports and reflects their developmental stage and culture, rather than forums, hearings, and councils that mimic traditional adult processes and traditional political processes (Checkoway, 1998; Checkoway & Richards-Schuster 2003; Checkoway, 2011) or classroom-driven projects requiring adherence to adult-established school standards. Requiring conformity to adult spaces and conventional political settings as a condition of participation can undermine the partnership process and goals (Lambarth, 2002), particularly as these attitudes have historically played a key role in marginalizing youth and ethnic minorities from political processes. In Lambarth's (2002) study of youth commissioners on a state board, one adult member asserted his belief that youth should place their "youth constituency" second to their role as commissioners so that all can be seen as equal. One might liken this perspective to the concept of colorblind racial attitudes, in which individuals claim to "not see color," or in this case "not see age." This approach most often results in denial of the oppression of the underrepresented group in question, which leads to resistance in addressing their marginalization or attending to their distinct culture and needs within the setting (Neville et al, 2013; Lambarth, 2002). In Checkoway, Allison, and Montoya's (2005) findings, some youth commissioners became so conformed to their new political context, that they became disconnected from their peers, lacked time for their usual roles and relationships, and as a result, withdrew from both youth and adults in their community. Accordingly, more initiatives are needed that maintain a community-base. Rather than pulling youth from their typical activities and social networks or placing them in positions to choose between their community member identity and their political leader identity, which can have harmful social and emotional consequences (Checkoway, Allison & Montoya, 2005), initiatives

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may minimize this dissonance by using these familiar activities and social networks as a *vehicle* for political participation (e.g. Checkoway & Richards-schuster, 2004, examples of a "gentrification treasure hunt" and "open microphone" night), as in the present study's use of basketball, performance art, and a youth lock-in designed in partnership with youth to engage themselves and their peers within their social networks in community evaluation and planning.

The present case study builds on existing effective practices in youth participation in neighborhood redevelopment planning and addresses the opportunities for further study mentioned above. The nature of this study called for a community-based approach that valued youth partnership and focused on community-designed research questions. This study contributes to the literature that is beginning to examine effective means of engaging youth at the municipal level in neighborhood redevelopment planning and learns from this process youth community members' understanding of the strengths and needs of a low income African American community undergoing redevelopment.

Using the approach of youth participatory action research (YPAR), this study rests on the foundation of the broader underlying principles of youth-adult partnership (Y-AP), positive youth development (PYD), and empowerment theory. YPAR provides a model for engaging youth in the information gathering process to inform social and structural change in their communities (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003) through the use of a youth-led space that highlights youth residents' strengths and ability to meaningfully contribute to the redevelopment process through mediums they consider engaging. Youth participation in community research and action has demonstrated significant effects of increasing youth sociopolitical skills and motivation to create community change (Ozer & Douglas, 2013). Thus, through YPAR, we capture rich information about how to engage youth in a neighborhood redevelopment process

while simultaneously preparing and inspiring them toward such engagement and collecting important information regarding youths' vision for neighborhood redevelopment to be used in the plans for their community (Ozer & Douglas, 2013; Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2013). As described by Checkoway and Richards-Schuster (2003),

> Youth participation in community evaluation research is an approach in which young people are active participants in the stages of knowledge development, including defining the problem, gathering the information, and using the results. When young people define their own problems rather than discuss the ones given by adult authorities; when they design their own age-appropriate methods rather than uncritically accept adult ones; and when they develop knowledge for their own social action and community change rather than "knowledge for its own sake"—when they work in these ways, as Wang and Burris (1997) contend, it can raise their consciousness and their spirit and move them to action.

The present study takes this approach within the context of a neighborhood redevelopment in midsized urban community. Portions of the Bristol Park neighborhood, a low income predominantly African American community are marked for demolition and rebuilding, necessitating relocation of some current residents. Other areas will be renovated, and new physical structures and services will be added. When this study was initiated, the decision to redevelop the Bristol Park neighborhood was definitive and the implementation of the redevelopment was designed with a three year timeline; however, the master plan for the new neighborhood remained to be decided. This plan would be devised by the Bristol Park Steering Committee, chaired by the director of the Neighborhood Services Department, and proposed to the City Council for final approval. Prior to the inception of this YPAR project, community input on the master plan for the Bristol Park neighborhood had been limited to heads of households,

and open forums intended to include voices from the community were scarcely attended by teens (City Staff, Personal Communication, 2012). These spaces were not designed to accommodate the developmental and sociopolitical locations of youth; rather, they were adult-created and adult-centered spaces consisting primarily of sitting, talking, and presenting for an hour or longer. The underrepresentation of youth was especially troubling to the city since the redevelopment will likely have a large impact on this population as emerging adults and, eventually, potential homeowners in the newly developed community (City Staff, Personal Communication, 2012). Like many cities, this city contains a paucity of formal structures targeted at seeking and incorporating ongoing youth input in local government processes, even as these processes directly affect youths' lives. The efforts the city had made to engage youth in the redevelopment planning were consistently part of a prescribed process planned and developed by adult leaders with interview questions designed by adult leaders, rather than conceptualized or implemented by the youth themselves. As a result, youth responses were constrained to the questions asked, participation was very low, and sustainability of gaining their input was not addressed. Thus, there was a need in this community for effective strategies to include youth voice in the redevelopment planning process and to better understand their needs and desires to incorporate into the master plan for the neighborhood.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

2.1 Sample

Four youth leaders served as both co-researchers and participants in this study. There were 18 additional youth that participated in the survey and focus groups. All participants resided in a mid-western small urban community.

Five youth were recruited to serve in the co-researcher role, all of whom agreed to participate, but one left the study after approximately two months of participation due to other commitments. The four youth leaders who remained in the project consisted of two African American boys, both age 17, and two African American girls, ages 15 and 16. Three of the youth leaders attended the same high school. Two of them lived in the Bristol Park neighborhood during the time of the project. The other two are siblings who grew up in the neighborhood but had recently moved to live with relatives in a nearby neighborhood. These two have since moved back into the Bristol Park neighborhood into a new home with their family.

There were 20 youth recruited (with an equal number of boys and girls) to be participants in the study. Among those recruited, 12 participated in the study. Six participants were not recruited but heard about the study from recruited youth and opted to participate. There were two individuals who arrived at the study but were not allowed to participate, because we could not obtain parental consent for them ahead of time. Demographic data for the 18 participants were gathered via self-report on surveys administered during the study. Table 1 describes the demographic features of the sample. Participants ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old (M=15.44) and were predominantly African American males. One participant also endorsed

being of a Hispanic ethnicity. Participants specified enrollment in seven different schools in the community, including three high schools, two middle schools, one community college, and one alternative school. Most participants in the study did not live in the Bristol Park neighborhood. The youth co-researchers indicated that there were not many teenage youth still living in the area and so identified youth with friends and family in the community and those who had recently moved from the community. Among those who did live in the neighborhood, all had lived there at least one to two years with most having lived there at least 3-5 years.

Nonresidents were asked how long they had lived in the city and how often they visited the Bristol Park neighborhood. Among the nonresidents of Bristol Park, most had lived in the city for over five years and visited the Bristol Park neighborhood infrequently. Table 2 describes the frequency that nonresident participants reported visiting the Bristol Park neighborhood.

2.2 Procedure

We believe that a critical stage of the present study occurred "before the beginning" (Sarason, 1972). For a year prior to initiating this project with youth, adult investigators engaged in extensive participation in city and community activities related to the Bristol Park neighborhood redevelopment plan. We attended public meetings, open forums, and events surrounding the redevelopment to better understand the local political context in which we would be working. We obtained and studied public documents published by the city, local news articles, and past City Council meeting videos to build our knowledge of the history, present status, and future plans for the Bristol Park neighborhood redevelopment. We, moreover, met with city officials and staff to gather information about the redevelopment, explain the YPAR approach, and share our vision for engaging youth as co-leaders in the redevelopment planning

process. We submitted a research proposal to the city's Neighborhood Services Department. We worked with this department in these various ways to build traction for a youth-directed project and for one that would inform the master plan for the Bristol Park neighborhood and pilot an infrastructure for ongoing youth participation in their department's processes.

The present study used a YPAR approach to collaboratively design and implement a project that gathered, examined, and disseminated perspectives from local African American youth concerning the redevelopment of the Bristol Park neighborhood. We identified youth co-researchers through a youth program at the local Boys and Girls Club (BGC). This program aimed to engage African American youth who were at risk for juvenile justice system-involvement in peer mentorship activities that supported the creation of counter-narratives of themselves. The program was founded by the adult community partner in this study. The graduate student researcher in this study had previously assisted the community partner in building the capacity of this program, implementing program activities, and developing an evaluation component. Therefore, both of the primary adult researchers in the present study had prior mentoring relationships with the youth recruited as co-researchers. The youth from this program that were recruited for the present study were selected on the basis of their residency in the Bristol Park neighborhood and their capacity for leadership and commitment to the project. Adult investigators met with potential youth collaborators at the BGC or in their homes to recruit them for the project. These youth were informed that this project would be a long term commitment in which we believed they were capable of being highly effective. They were each paid a total of $100 for their participation.

Our first meeting as a group consisted of the youth collaborators leading the adult researchers on a walking tour of the Bristol Park neighborhood while commenting on the history

of the neighborhood, how they have seen it evolve, where they felt changes were warranted, where they felt new structures should be built, and areas where they tended to see problematic or criminal activities occurring and how these could be addressed. Youth collaborators additionally shared ideas for how they felt youth and the community could collaborate with the city to make positive and sustainable changes. Adult researchers offered to begin the collaboration with this neighborhood tour to establish from the beginning our position that the youth had important knowledge to share with us and to demonstrate that this project would be a mutual effort. This experience also began an ongoing effort to nurture the relationships among youth and adult researchers in order to promote a partnership that was sustainable and that would have a positive impact on everyone involved. Adult investigators invited the youth partners to share their ideas for how to build their knowledge of the Bristol Park neighborhood redevelopment and confidence in providing input to the city. Youth collaborators indicated that they would like to see how another neighborhood different from their own operated in order to gain ideas about what strategies could be employed in their neighborhood. Consequently, our next outing was to a neighborhood in a nearby town, where adult investigators organized an interview with a local resident and her child followed by a tour of the neighborhood. Youth partners led the interview, and this allowed them to investigate a wider array of options they could suggest for the city to incorporate into the redevelopment of their neighborhood.

To increase the youth's knowledge about the city's initial vision for the redevelopment of Bristol Park, adult investigators next developed a condensed packet for youth collaborators that described the Bristol Park Neighborhood Plan and Annual Action Plan published by the city to describe the redevelopment process and next steps. The condensed packet added pictures and reworded content to an appropriate reading level to make these documents more accessible to

youth. The adult and youth researchers reviewed this information together, and youth researchers

compiled questions regarding the neighborhood plan. The Neighborhood Coordinator from the

city's Neighborhood Services Department then met with the research team at a youth center in

the Bristol Park neighborhood to provide the youth with more information about the

redevelopment plan and respond to their questions. Through this conversation, youth researchers

were able to begin their own collaboration with the city as individual stakeholders with a

distinctive voice. Youth researchers were then asked to begin attending Bristol Park Steering

Committee meetings as audience members to remain updated about the redevelopment process

and were invited as key stakeholders to be interviewed by the master planning consultants

contracted by the city to develop the new Bristol Park neighborhood. They were the only non-

adult stakeholders interviewed among a stakeholder group of city officials, community leaders,

business leaders, the park district, and service providers. Furthermore, two of the youth

researchers were interviewed and appointed to the Bristol Park Steering Committee by the

director of the Neighborhood Services Department and are the only youth members of the

committee. The Neighborhood Services Department invited the research team to submit a report

of the findings from the present YPAR study to be shared with master planning consultants to

inform the Bristol Park neighborhood plan and to present about our process and findings at the

Bristol Park Steering Committee Meeting and the Neighborhood Services Advisory Board

meeting at the city chambers. This procedure of engaging youth collaborators was intended to

build the foundation for their leadership in organizing youth in their community to become

informed about the neighborhood redevelopment and to provide their perspectives for the master

plan. Youth collaborators were trained by adult investigators in research ethics, and with the

training in both research and neighborhood redevelopment along with the leadership experiences

they had acquired, our research team collaboratively designed a project to engage youth residents in mapping the strengths and needs of the Bristol Park community and spearheading discussions of how to sustain youth engagement in neighborhood improvement efforts.

To gather survey and focus group data, youth researchers developed an overnight youth "lock-in" at BGC. Beyond serving as a data-gathering event, the lock-in also aimed to foster an environment of collaboration, political involvement, and community empowerment among youth, particularly low income African American youth, in which youth could create an awareness of their unique needs in the community. The event was designed specifically to appeal to a youth population. It centered on a midnight basketball competition followed by a youth talent show, the winners of which received fifty-dollar grand prizes, with smaller incentives for runners-up. Youth lock-in participants were identified by the four youth researchers. Participants were chosen based on their residency in the Bristol Park neighborhood, time spent in the neighborhood, and/or relationship to others recruited for the event. Youth researchers noted that several youth had moved from the neighborhood within the last year. They desired to gather perspectives of those youth who had lived there in the past and that lived there currently in addition to those who only viewed the neighborhood from the outside. The research team visited prospective youth participants' homes to recruit them for the project and obtain informed assent/consent from them and their parents/guardians, if applicable.

Researchers in this study developed two separate surveys, one for residents and a second for nonresidents of Bristol Park, with questions primarily designed by youth researchers. This allowed youth researchers to gather information that they deemed relevant for communicating the perspective of their population. It additionally provided an opportunity for them to gain experience in designing research questions. The surveys included both open and closed-ended

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questions. The resident survey was designed to obtain information from youth residents of

Bristol Park about their knowledge, thoughts, and feelings regarding the Bristol Park community

and the redevelopment as well as their wants and needs for the new neighborhood. The

nonresident survey was intended to capture perceptions of youth living in the city but outside of

the Bristol Park community about what the Bristol Park community needs and what would make

it more attractive to visit.

The four youth leaders directed the lock-in event activities with the support of adult

leaders in the project. The first activity was the completion of the resident and nonresident

surveys. Youth leaders assisted in identifying which participants lived in Bristol Park and which

were nonresidents and assisted in explaining to the participants where the area referred to by the

city as Bristol Park was located. Participants were provided a map of Bristol Park with their

surveys. Youth leaders responded to their questions and checked in with participants frequently

to ensure their understanding of survey questions. Following survey completion, the participants

engaged in a conversation with the Neighborhood Programs Manager from the city's

Neighborhood Services Department who agreed to come speak at the event. She provided

information to the youth about the redevelopment, gathered feedback from them about their

wants and needs, and encouraged them to assert their voice in the redevelopment process. At this

point in the event, the youth chose to divide the remainder of activities by gender, which did not

follow with the original plan for the event. The next activity was an icebreaker, followed by a

redevelopment plan trivia game created by the research team using the Bristol Park

Neighborhood Plan published by the city. The participant who provided the most correct answers

the most quickly was awarded a bag of candy. This was followed by a focus group in which

youth were asked to elaborate on their survey responses, describe thoughts and feelings about the

redevelopment, and discuss sustainability of youth organizing in the neighborhood. Next, participants engaged in a conversation with four Black graduate students (two men and two women, one of which was an investigator in the present study) who agreed to speak with them on an informal panel. This discussion was intended to foster dialogue about the university and community relationship and what resources youth would like to see university students provide to the community. It was also an opportunity for the youth to see and interact with African American students pursing graduate degrees in hopes that this would be motivational for them and serve as a networking opportunity. At the same time, the conversation was intended to be organic and driven by what the youth chose to discuss. It manifested in a dialogue primarily about growing up in low income neighborhoods, pathways to accomplishing career goals despite this background, and the importance of giving back to one's community. Following this discussion, the basketball competition commenced, followed by the talent show. Throughout the event, youth were provided with several breaks from writing and discussion in which they were able to play video and arcade games, dance, and help with cooking and baking for snacks throughout the night.

Data were collected at the event through the surveys, observations, field notes, and both audio and visual recordings which were transcribed following the event. This study primarily took an exploratory approach; however, youth researchers formed several hypotheses throughout the study development based on their personal experience and understanding of youth in their community. They predicted a number of factors that would promote youth engagement in the neighborhood redevelopment planning, which they incorporated into the study design. Specifically, they hypothesized that basketball would particularly appeal to teenage boys in their community and that girls would participate if their friends did as well. They predicted that a

divide would exist in the activities preferred and perspectives held by girls and boys. They additionally predicted that youth would have little to no knowledge of the Bristol Park Redevelopment plan nor refer to the area the city called Bristol Park using this term. This was largely a reflection of their individual experiences prior to engagement in this YPAR project. They believed that this lack of understanding of what Bristol Park meant was a key factor in why youth had declined to participate in events and forums related to the redevelopment of this area, because it was not clear to them that it was referring to their own neighborhood. They also believed that youth were simply unaware of such events and opportunities for providing their perspectives regarding the redevelopment. Youth researchers additionally hypothesized that youths' primary concerns regarding the present state of the Bristol Park neighborhood would relate to neighborhood crime, housing conditions, cleanliness, and lack of recreational facilities, with an emphasis on basketball courts. Finally, they predicted that the primary strengths of the neighborhood identified by youth would include the sense of community built in the neighborhood, the recent decline in criminal activity, which they attributed to several residents moving from the neighborhood in the recent year, and the positive memories formed in the community for individuals and families who grew up there.

2.3 Tables

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants.

Demographic characteristics	n	%
Race		
Black or African American	9	50
Mixed race	4	22.2
No response	5	27.8
Gender		
Male	14	77.8
Female	4	22.2
School Type		
Middle School	4	22.2
High School	6	33.3
Alternative School	2	11.1
Community College	1	5.6
No response	5	27.8
Bristol Park Residency Status		
Resident	5	27.8
Nonresident	13	72.2
Length of Bristol Park Residency (of Residents of Bristol Park)		
Less than one year	0	0
1-2 years	1	20
3-5 years	2	40
More than five years	2	40
Length of City Residency (of Nonresidents of Bristol Park)		
Less than one year	0	0
1-2 years	2	15.4
3-5 years	3	23.1
More than five years	8	61.5

Table 2. Frequency of nonresident participant visits to Bristol Park.

Frequency	n	%
Almost everyday	0	0
Only on the weekends	2	15.4
A few times a month	1	7.7
A few times a year	5	38.5
Almost never	5	38.5

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

3.1 Knowledge of Bristol Park Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan

The most frequently endorsed response to the survey question, "Where have you heard about or found information about the redevelopment?" was "Other youth," which was selected by eight youth in the sample. The second most common response was "Adult, non-family member," which was endorsed by four participants, followed by "Parent/adult family member" and "TV," which were both endorsed by three participants. The items that were not endorsed by any participants were "Website," "City-led community forum," "Community-led community forum," and "Other."

Participants displayed limited knowledge of the details of the neighborhood redevelopment and still had some difficulty identifying the Bristol Park neighborhood following explanation of the area and distribution of outlined maps of the area. When provided with the surveys, participants frequently asked what Bristol Park was and stated that they did not know where that was or what it meant. When described by street names and nicknames for different areas of the neighborhood used by youth, participants then seemed to recognize the area referenced. Participants who indicated having heard about the redevelopment more often knew that the area was officially called Bristol Park. During the dialogue with the city staff person, participants were able to identify the general vicinity of the neighborhood and display some knowledge of what neighborhood redevelopment means. One participant responded when asked what the city was doing, "They uh, they remodeling the uh…park, by Bellefontaine [*Street in the neighborhood*]," and when asked what "redevelop" means, one participant responded with some

uncertainty, "Like, fix it up, or…tear down?" During the girls' trivia game, participants were not able to immediately recall the names of the three neighborhoods that Bristol Park comprises and what the different plans were for each of these neighborhoods. However, they appeared to have a basic understanding of the intentions of the neighborhood redevelopment. They mentioned "better environment," "new parks," and "less crime" to reference the goals for the neighborhood redevelopment. In the boys' trivia game, participants were able to quickly recall the names of the three neighborhoods and identify several goals of the redevelopment—"crime," "noise," "better homes," "good place to be at," "new environment," "making it a better place," "funner parks."

In response to the survey question, "What do you know about the Bristol Park Community? What do you know about the city's plan to redevelop that community? Please describe," 11 youth wrote a response including that they knew "nothing" or "not much" about the redevelopment or that they were not familiar with the Bristol Park area. The other responses could be categorized into two themes—improvement of the social structure and improvement of the physical structure. Regarding improvement of the social structure, participants described the plan as an attempt to improve the community and our society, decrease crime, and increase diversity in the neighborhood. Regarding improvement of the physical structure, participants emphasized new housing and cleaner streets.

3.2 Perspectives on Bristol Park Neighborhood Redevelopment

Overall, participants seemed to believe that the city had positive intentions for redeveloping the neighborhood, largely viewing the redevelopment as a needed neighborhood improvement effort. Male participants tended to be more concerned about the potential negative consequences of redevelopment than female participants. The girls' focus group primarily

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discussed needs and desires for the new neighborhood and how to sustain youth involvement in neighborhood improvement projects (discussed later in this section). In the boys' focus group, participants engaged in more contentious discussion regarding their perspectives of the upcoming redevelopment. They debated about the extent to which the redevelopment would be beneficial for the community. They felt that while it would improve the physical environment, it may damage the existing social structures and family structures that they have grown up with and enjoy.

> …I feel like it shouldn't happen, you know? People got childhoods there…so I say, I say no. I don't agree at all…Forget a basketball court, all that. That's how I feel. I was young and I grew up over there, you know what I'm saying? That's where I'm from.

The boys also shared concerns about where the families that had to relocate would live while their homes were being rebuilt. They were not informed of the plan for the families in terms of provision of housing and resources for them. The male youth facilitators therefore proceeded to explain to the group that the city was locating housing for families compelled to relocate and providing a number of resources, including financial resources such as Section 8 vouchers. The facilitators furthermore explained that the plan was for families to have the opportunity to move back into the neighborhood when it was completed. However, participants remained skeptical about what the city was doing to support these families.

> [*Youth Facilitator*] They not just throwing 'em out their house putting 'em on the streets. They taking care of these people.
>
> [*Youth Participant*] …like what they mean by like taking care of them, cause they can, they can make it seem like they going to a better [place] or they going somewhere that's nicer...

However, participants expressed a great deal of ambivalence about new housing. They indicated that their families desired better housing conditions and at the same time connected the current physical structure to the memories they had built in their homes. One boy described this ambivalence in his grandmother:

> She [feels like she] need[s] a new house, but like when they sent her a paper in the mail like they were gonna tear down her house and they were gonna help her find new house she like I'm not ready to move…she not ready to leave her house. At all. She been living there for how long—like seven year[s]—she been living in that same house. I mean we got so much memory. Every birthday I have I been here, know what I'm saying? That's how I feel.

In contrast, there were four participants who responded to the survey question, "If you have to relocate, what are your feelings about this," and all provided a response indicating that it would not "matter" to them or "affect" them.

3.3 Bristol Park Neighborhood Needs

Participants identified a need to improve the neighborhood environment by both renovating existing structures and building new structures. On the survey, where participants were asked to choose from a list what they would like to see in the new neighborhood, the most frequently selected items were lights (selected by 13 participants), sports facilities (selected by 10 participants), playgrounds (selected by 9 participants), youth center (selected by 9 participants), and sidewalks (selected by 8 participants). When asked to specify the response for sports facilities, all youth that responded specified basketball courts. The items least frequently endorsed were fenced areas (selected by 1 participant), organized community activities (selected

by 3 participants), and community center (selected by 3 participants). In response to the question, "What changes would you like to see in the new Bristol Park neighborhood?" (Asked of all participants) and "What would attract you to visit or live in this neighborhood?" (Only asked of nonresidents of Bristol Park), the primary themes were basketball courts, new parks, and a cleaner environment, which were each included in four responses out of thirteen respondents to this question. Decreased violence was identified as a need by two respondents. New roads and new housing were each mentioned by one respondent, and two youth indicated that they were unsure of what the neighborhood needed. During the conversation with a city staff person, youth expressed desires to see a more diverse array of recreational options aside from just basketball, specifically, a football field, volleyball court, tennis court, biking trails, swimming pool, safe parks with fencing for children to be protected from running into the street, parks with grills to cookout, and play places for children and families. They also further described the existing housing conditions to assert the need for new and improved housing. Participants described some of the current housing as "broke down" and resembling "shack[s]." They indicated that the homes had broken windows and holes in the roofs. During the boys' focus group, when asked what specifically participants' believed was problematic about the housing and what they thought were the value of the homes, participants responded that the homes were in, "bad shape," "dirty," and "abandoned" and that they were of little value financially.

Five participants in the sample indicated that their families would have to relocate as a result of the Bristol Park neighborhood redevelopment. In response to the survey question, "What services or supports would be helpful for you and your family in the relocation process," the majority of youth did not select any of the items or write in their own responses. Youth

employment, tutoring, and college planning services were each selected by one participant. All other items were not selected by any participants.

3.4 Bristol Park Strengths

Three themes emerged from the survey question, "If you ever visit Bristol Park, what do you do when you go there? Please describe"—spend time with friends, "chill," and play basketball. Participants responded to a survey question "What is already attractive about the neighborhood (Bristol Park) that does NOT need to be changed? Think of what you do there that is fun or makes you feel happy when you visit or what seems nice there when you walk or ride past it" for nonresidents and, "What do you like about the neighborhood that you would NOT want to see changed? Think of what you do there that is fun or makes you feel happy in your neighborhood. What do you do in your spare time?" Seven out of fifteen residents provided a response of "nothing" or "I don't know." Non-residents indicated fun experiences, perceived safety, youth centers, the park, and the people. Participants described the people and the community they have built there as particularly strong aspects of the neighborhoods. One youth noted, "I don't want the people to move because we have built a tight friendly and family relationship." During the boys' focus group, participants elaborated on how this aspect of the community has recently grown. They described that within the past year, as many people had been moving out of the neighborhood, crime had decreased and the area had become less chaotic and more peaceful, which they believed allowed for greater community bonding. People were able to feel safer coming outside and spending time with their neighbors.

> Yeah it changed a lot. Like, I say like last year sometime, I mean the year before last year, it was a lot more calm, you know what I'm saying?...It was like more people was

together, everybody knew each other, you know what I'm saying? You could walk

around, have friends, you know what I'm saying? Stay out 'til like six o clock in the

morning...nobody got had to worry about nobody…Everybody came together.

One participant additionally noted that this development of a close knit community has allowed

for greater accountability from one another concerning maintaining positive behavior—"…If it

was [an] argument, everybody like knew that person, and they would try to calm him down…and

that worked."

3.5 Effective Youth Engagement Strategies in Bristol Park Redevelopment Planning

Fourteen out of the 18 respondents selected "yes" to the survey question asking whether

or not they would participate in a volunteer day hosted by the community or the city. In response

to the follow-up question of "why or why not," youth identified both social and environmental

motives. The most repeated response was to make the community better or look better, which

was noted by five participants. The second most commonly mentioned motive was intrinsic joy

that comes from helping people, which was described by three respondents. Two respondents

indicated that they would participate in order to meet new people and increase their social circle.

In the focus groups, when asked what sort of volunteer work in the community

participants were willing to do, participants primarily responded that they would participate in

neighborhood beautification efforts such as picking up trash and planting flowers. An additional

response was to assist elderly people and others with special needs in the community.

Participants expressed some ambivalence about intervening to prevent violence and criminal

behaviors in the neighborhoods. They hoped to promote peace in the community, and at the same

time preferred to prioritize their own safety and not get involved in matters that did not directly involve them.

When asked what would make volunteering more fun and appealing for youth, both the boys' and girls' focus group participants highlighted the importance of having multiple options for volunteer activities, because different youth would be interested in different avenues of participation. They believed that teens were typically attached to their particular interests and often not willing to adapt to a different activity. One boy described the population as "hard headed," believing that if the activity or event did not include exactly what they wanted, then they would opt out of participating. It was also apparent in the present study that youth were more comfortable engaging in activities and discussions of the neighborhood redevelopment with their same-gendered peers, as they voluntarily divided the focus group, trivia game, and fun activities by gender with the girls groups led by the two female youth leaders and male groups by the two male youth leaders. This gender division had also been apparent in our youth leadership structure in which the male and female youth leaders often had divergent ideas and perspectives, at times opted to work separately, and at times conversed more openly and productively in meetings where only one gender was present.

Youths' involvement in the lock-in event seemed largely contingent upon the youth leadership structure in place for designing, recruiting, and implementing the study. Multiple aspects of the lock-in, developed and led by the four youth co-researchers, emerged in the focus groups as important ingredients for making civic participation appealing for youth. Specifically, participants indicated that they would be more likely to participate in neighborhood improvement efforts if activities involved money or prizes, food, music, and other people they knew. The disproportionate number of male participants emerged from the high demand for the basketball

competition at the event, as the male youth co-researchers predicted. The social network based recruitment process resulted in high participation in the lock-in. Some youth who had heard about the event from friends that night and came along with them had to be turned away when they arrived, because we had not previously gathered parental consent for their participation. During the event, it was evident that the youth leaders' social connections to the youth participants facilitated participants' understanding of and engagement with the topics discussed. The following was said by a youth facilitator in the boys' focus group addressing one participant by name after participants expressed lack of understanding about the location of the area referred to by the city as Bristol Park:

> I mean, most, most everybody up in there, they know, if ya'll don't live over there, ya'll know, ya'll know what it's like over there…ya'll be over there; you walk past it all...all the time. You be at my house all the time.

The other male youth facilitator had similar success in using social ties to connect the redevelopment information to the participants personally.

> [*Youth Facilitator*] I'm [going to] break it out to you [participant name]. You know where your cousin living at [participant name]? He ain't gonna be able to live there no more. They taking his house from him…[It] should be getting [really] real for people up in here.

> [*Youth Participant*] I know, they tearing down Roper Street.

The youth leaders' friendship with the youth participants also provided them latitude to be very direct with participants in order to demand more responsiveness from their peers. One youth leader asserted, "So what we need is now that ya'll stop laughing, give us real feedback," when the participants were joking around and not paying attention. Participants responded by

becoming more attentive and engaging in the focus group discussion. Throughout the event, participants were noticeably more engaged when the youth leaders spoke and directed activities than when adult facilitators did. When the adult researcher and city staff person spoke at the beginning of the event to engage them in the surveys and initial conversation with the city staff person, the youth demonstrated low engagement and attentiveness, exemplified by multiple side conversations, laughter, and little responsiveness to questions. The point at which the youth leaders interjected emerged as a pivotal moment in participant engagement. When the youth leaders spoke, they referenced how they had been engaged in the redevelopment process through the YPAR project and communicated their perception of the subject matter as highly significant to them. This appeared to signal to the youth participants that this was a matter that they should be concerned with as well. Furthermore, the youth leaders acted as translators for adult facilitators. For example, after the city staff person explained the housing acquisition and resident relocation processes, one youth leader inserted, "Alright, basically what she trying to say, if ya'll live in a house for a long time ya'll had to get moved out of there, what ya'll gonna do?" Following such interjections, participants' side conversations decreased and participation in the central conversation increased.

An additional shift in youth responsiveness occurred when the importance and usefulness of their input was established. When the city staff person indicated that she would report their suggestions to the mayor, engagement with the conversation increased substantially. Participants began to raise their hands several times and even talk over each other at times to provide suggestions for the neighborhood and voice their perspective. When the city staff person asked why they thought she came there to hear their opinion, one participant responded, "Cause it matters more." It became clear that participants' engagement was in part contingent on how

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seriously they believed the city would take their perspective and on their own belief in the importance of providing their perspective. The latter appeared to increase as they gained information and clarity about the neighborhood redevelopment process and purpose. By the end of the conversation with the city staff person, it was apparent that youth's curiosity for and concern with the neighborhood redevelopment process increased. The conversation ended with participants asking her questions about how the decision to redevelop was made, how it was being financed, and when it will occur. Later, in the focus groups, they were able to discuss the redevelopment on a more personal level grounded in their newly acquired understanding about what was occurring.

In accordance with this, participants' opportunity to engage with the city staff person occurred at 9:00PM on a Friday night, which youth leaders identified as a demonstration for youth participants of the city's commitment to supporting youth engagement in the neighborhood redevelopment process. Youth leaders expressed preference for collaboration and mutual support between the city and the community and predicted this would be a salient ingredient for sustaining youths' engagement in the neighborhood redevelopment process. They indicated higher motivation to continue engaging in civic participation related to the neighborhood redevelopment after receiving invitations to (a) participate in stakeholder interviews with the city's master planning consultants, (b) sit on the Bristol Park Steering Committee charged with implementing the master plan for the Bristol Park Neighborhood, and (c) present their findings from the present study to both the Bristol Park Steering Committee and the Neighborhood Advisory Board. In the beginning of the project, youth leaders' perspectives of the redevelopment wavered paradoxically between "Why are they doing this?" and "Why didn't they do this a long time ago?" They were frustrated with the conditions they had been living in and at

the same time felt blindsided by the redevelopment because they were not aware of what exactly would happen or that there were opportunities for them to gain information and provide their input leading up to the decision to redevelop. Gaining awareness of the latter seemed to foster a perceived sense of control regarding the situation that appeared to reduce some anxiety about it and empower them toward not only civic participation but civic leadership around the issue of their community's redevelopment.

In addition to forming a partnership with city staff, it was evident that the formation of collaborative partnerships and personal relationships between the youth and adult research partners had a strong impact on sustaining long term engagement of the four youth partners in this project. Their engagement was facilitated by their prior relationship with the adult researchers and the accountability that this relationship fostered. Ample opportunities for personal conversations before and after group meetings and participation in social outings as a group led to closer relationships and mutual trust and interdependence regarding the project. Furthermore, participation was facilitated by adult researchers' provision of transportation to meetings for youth researchers and provision of meals before or after meetings. Lastly, adult researchers found success in demonstrating flexibility through willingness to communicate with youth by means they identified as most accessible to them (e.g. social media) and adaptation to changes in such access over time (e.g. inconsistent phone access). Persistence in this communication (e.g. contacting family members, stopping by their homes, attempting multiple means of communication at different times) when youth were not responsive, moreover, resulted in their sustained engagement over the long term of the project, despite the occurrence of short-term decreases in their engagement level.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to engage youth in a neighborhood redevelopment planning process while learning from youth what factors foster their engagement in neighborhood improvement efforts. The investigators found that a participatory model partnering youth and adult co-researchers in the design and implementation of youth-directed programming centered on discussing the neighborhood redevelopment was effective for attaining such information. Participatory action research is aimed at using collective knowledge of community members and researchers to thoughtfully design and implement a study that has direct relevance for addressing community problems (Brydon-Miller et al, 2011). This process has demonstrated effectiveness for producing rich findings that have resulted in positive outcomes for communities in multiple contexts (e.g. Kral et al, 2011; Ozer & Wright, 2012) Adult investigators in the present study engaged a small group of youth as leaders with whom they had an established relationship and worked with these four youth to build their leadership skills and competency regarding the neighborhood redevelopment. These youth were then empowered to lead their peers in action-oriented research to improve their community and assert their voices in a local political process. Their engagement in this project was driven by their personal connection to the neighborhood as young people who had grown up in the area. In line with the idea of youth's distinct "sociological eye" described by Ferguson (2001), these youth were allowed to use their unique vantage point in the community to develop measures and procedures that were effective for learning about the needs of their population. The study benefitted from these youths' primary knowledge regarding the neighborhood's history and present conditions and their access to other

youth residents of the neighborhood and city. The latter was gained not only by youth leaders' identification of youth living in the neighborhood, but also by their understanding of how to reach these youth and communicate effectively with them about the redevelopment.

Youth leaders used their social networks for recruitment, identified which activities and incentives would be appealing for their peers, and served as models of young people who have taken interest and action in the neighborhood redevelopment process. The greater effectiveness of this recruitment process compared with traditional promotional methods for city events and forums suggests that flyers and announcements may be limited in their effectiveness for recruiting youth, perhaps because youth are highly motivated to attend an event when they learn about it from friends or family members in their age group, thus believing that it is a popular event among that group. Furthermore, our recruitment process suggested the effectiveness of advertising that emphasized the fun and recreational aspects of the event while asserting that these aspects were contingent upon engagement in the research and action processes regarding the neighborhood redevelopment. Given that "youth-friendly" measures have been found to be effective for engaging youth in neighborhood redevelopment planning (Lambarth, 2002; Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999), our finding that recruiting youth in similarly accessible ways that highlighted these youth-centered strategies is logical. Altogether, this study found that youth-led, youth-centered strategies were effective for bringing youth to the table to engage in neighborhood redevelopment planning, in accordance with research and theory stating that youth become more civically engaged when they are allowed to drive the process and define their own questions (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004).

Participants in the present study indicated primarily finding information about the redevelopment from other youth. Participants furthermore displayed little knowledge of the

specific details of the neighborhood redevelopment at the start of the lock-in. This signifies a need for youth-centered outlets for disseminating information regarding the neighborhood redevelopment in order to more effectively reach youth with this information. We saw that as youth became more informed about the redevelopment, their willingness to engage in discussion regarding the topic increased along with their ability to articulate opinions for the neighborhood plan. This is in line with research that highlights orientation and training as a key ingredient of effective youth engagement as partners with adults in neighborhood redevelopment planning (Lambarth, 2002; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008). The present study was unique in its use of youth from the community as cultural brokers in this training process. The youth partners were able to translate the information about the neighborhood redevelopment into more accessible terms culturally and developmentally, playing a primary role in disseminating information to their peers. One fundamental aspect of this informational process was learning the terminology used by the city to refer to their neighborhood. Because youth did not refer to the neighborhood using the same term as the city, they were simply unaware that the redevelopment and forums for civic participation in the redevelopment applied to them. This finding was in accordance with youth investigators' hypothesis and suggests a need for cities to communicate with communities about neighborhood redevelopment processes in terms familiar to them. This disconnect was especially apparent in participants who indicated they would have to relocate as a result of the redevelopment. We observed that survey responses at the beginning of the event provided little to no expression of feeling about relocation or perspective on how to assist families through the relocation process. In contrast, participants were quite vocal in the focus groups toward the end of the night regarding their beliefs about the impact of relocation on themselves and their families. They articulated an attachment to their current homes for

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themselves and their families as well as concerns about what resources the city would provide

for their families for locating new housing and financial resources. Our findings indicate that

what may seem like apathy of teens toward neighborhood redevelopment in their community

may rather reflect a lack of accurate and complete information originating from a shortage of

informational settings designed by and for their population. In such a setting, youth can learn

more readily through hearing the information in their own language and having developmentally

appropriate activities such as games and competitions to hold their attention and assist with

retention of the information disseminated. Such youth-friendly activities have been substantiated

in previous research (Lambarth, 2002; Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999) and were

effective in engaging youth in this study. The present study built on this concept by using

strategies that were also culturally relevant for African American youth (i.e. basketball) and for

African American youth in this community specifically (i.e. a Boys and Girls Club lock-in,

which has been popular among youth in this community historically). We suspect that the fact

that youth comprised the majority of participants in the setting also increased their comfort and

confidence speaking about the complex issues discussed, and that a traditional adult-centered

political space may inadvertently suppress such voices. The importance of youth-centered spaces

was additionally reflected in the interesting finding that a youth center was among the most

frequently selected needs of the community, while a community center was one of the least

frequently endorsed by participants. Therefore, information provision was a key strategy for

yielding meaningful feedback from youth in the planning process, and unique methods for

disseminating such information to youth were critical.

The four youth leaders were able to accurately predict several key ingredients for

engaging youth in this community, as evidenced by the high youth participation in the lock-in

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and by youths' responses during the lock-in regarding what would motivate them to participate in neighborhood activism, such as games, prizes, food, and basketball. Youth leaders were additionally able to accurately predict the primary needs, strengths, and concerns participants would identify in regard to the Bristol Park neighborhood redevelopment plan. Youth participants highlighted safety, recreation, new roads, improved housing and youth centers with educational services as primary needs of the neighborhood. Many of these concerns are also comparable to those that have been studied in a variety of other geographical locations (e.g. Mullahey, Susskind, & Checkoway, 1999; McKoy & Vincent, 2007), suggesting that there are some cross-cutting issues that youth tend to identify in neighborhoods marked for redevelopment. Youth investigators also hypothesized that memories and social networks were the primary strengths of the neighborhood and that youth's primary concerns would regard the ability of families to reenter the neighborhood following relocation as well as what financial resources would be available to them in the process. These predictions accurately reflected our findings in this study. This also suggests that youth leaders contributed thoughtfully to the conceptual framework of the research, allowing us to identify important mechanisms for shaping youth involvement and receive youth input in the neighborhood master plan.

Deeper examination of youth participants' desire for change in the neighborhood revealed that their hopes primarily consisted of changes to the physical structure, such as improved housing which was a widely held desire. Youth's perceptions of neighborhood needs were largely shaped by the activities that they engaged in or in which they wished to engage. Basketball was a primary example of such an activity. Furthermore, the needs identified were often related with one another. For example, the need for lighting was connected with the need for basketball and other recreational options in that youth wished to have greater lighting to be

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able to remain outside playing later into the night. Lights were also linked to safety, particularly as the youth's limited transportation options resulted in them frequently having to walk home alone at night. Improving the physical structure of the neighborhood was similarly related to safety in that a dilapidated appearance led to others in the city devaluing the neighborhood and thus viewing it as an area they could come to engage in criminal activities and create greater pollution. Physical structure changes were a fundamental desire for redevelopment as well as a common understanding of the goal of redevelopment.

Interestingly, youth's beliefs about why the redevelopment was occurring also included a dimension of social as well as physical change, in which the neighborhood would diversify demographically. This belief was connected to their concerns about social and economic access to the neighborhood following the redevelopment which they viewed as a potential threat to the maintenance of their social networks within the neighborhood and to their psychological attachment to the neighborhood. At the same time, similar to what youth felt in the Y-PLAN project (McKoy & Vincent, 2007), many youth in this study agreed that a recent strength that emerged in the neighborhood was the peacefulness resulting from many people recently moving out of the neighborhood. It appears to be a common narrative among both youth and adults (observed at public forums) in this community that there are certain "bad" people that the neighborhood could do without and that the "good" people should not be punished for the actions of the others or stereotyped into the same category with them. Community was a strong component of youths' attachment to the neighborhood, and the potential social changes produced by redevelopment were highly questioned.

When asked about neighborhood strengths, a sizeable number of youth in the sample also indicated uncertainty or that there were no strengths of the neighborhood. This perhaps suggests

that they are not accustomed to thinking or talking about the neighborhood through the lens of strengths in a time when its deficits are so thoroughly being examined. This finding has implications for their civic participation in neighborhood redevelopment as well as the impact the redevelopment may have on them (Anderson, 2010). A study by Anderson (2010) found that residents who held a deficit-focused view of their neighborhood were less likely to engage in civic participation regarding neighborhood redevelopment and more likely to experience negative psychological effects of the redevelopment. This highlights the importance of examining both strengths and needs and nurturing positive relationships among residents. The four youth leaders in this study in many ways reflected the strength of the neighborhood, encouraging other youth to care for their community and take ownership over its outcomes. Similar processes that embody and draw on neighborhood strengths may benefit communities undergoing redevelopment through helping them identify strengths and advocate to protect those aspects of their community.

Much of what youth participants reported in this study reflects similar concerns found in previous research with adults regarding neighborhood redevelopment such as safety and increased youth programming (Greenburg & Lewis, 2000). Contrary to popular stereotypes of teens as solely focused on the interests of their own population and their individual wellbeing (Aubrun & Grady, 2000), the teens in this study expressed a great deal of concern for the welfare of young children and the elderly and were also able to articulate thoughts about the needs of other youth and families aside from their own. This finding supports work suggesting that teens can contribute thoughtfully to discourse on neighborhood improvement and critically examine the needs and strengths of their communities to improve quality of life for all residents (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004; McKoy & Vincent, 2007; Santo, Ferguson, & Trippel,

2010). While youth and adults may share several key interests and visions for their community,

youth also have unique perspectives to offer from which adults may learn due to their different

vantage points from their social locations in the community (Ferguson, 2001; Checkoway &

Richards-Schuster, 2004). This study provides one approach for gathering such perspectives in

authentic and influential ways.

Overall, we found that the factors predominantly influencing youths' willingness to

engage in neighborhood redevelopment planning included peers and city staff asserting the

importance of youth voice in the process, youth leadership and social networking in attaining

youth voice in the process, and the inclusion of developmentally appropriate activities, including

competitions with prizes. The ability to engage youth as partners to co-lead the process was

critical and necessitated intentional strategies. Long term engagement of youth partners was

grounded in strong relationships between youth and adult research partners as well as the

accountability provided by this collaborative model. We found that the aggressive nature of adult

researchers' outreach to youth partners was essential to long term youth participation. Adult

researchers were persistent in their efforts to follow up with youth if they missed meetings and

adjusted their communication methods, schedules, and plans to accommodate their youth

partners' needs and preferences. When others might have read the youths' lack of follow through

at times as lack of commitment or disinterest in continuing the project, adult researchers in this

project maintained the perspective that inconsistency and impulsivity was normal

developmentally in a youth population. Therefore, they did not hold the expectation of consistent

efficiency and professionalism or read the absence of these as a failure of the youth to actualize

their potential to contribute in this process. Previous research has supported this approach,

finding that authoritarian approaches and strict guidelines for participation imposed by adults

tend to undermine the experience of respect and trust for youth in youth-adult partnerships (Camino, 2000). A focus on youths' strength's and resilience rather than on where they fall short of traditional standards for political involvement allows adults to discover the assets that youth voice brings to a civic process, including a great deal of energy and innovative ideas and strategies (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Furthermore, we worked with a population of youth from a low income background and recognized the importance of taking into account the youth's lack of stability in their housing situations, resources, and mental space to dedicate to this community project. Such flexibility was critical to the success of the project and difficult for formal organizations and institutions to accomplish as it is somewhat countercultural to traditional organizational functioning (Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008). It is important to examine means for restructuring organizational infrastructure to better accommodate the presence of such marginalized populations with developmental, social, and economic barriers to formal civic participation (Flanagan et al, 1998; Lambarth, 2002; Fine et al, 2004; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Checkoway, 2011).

This study represents one example of how a YPAR model was used to include youth voices in a neighborhood redevelopment process in one community and the results it produced. It is important to note that youth from different backgrounds and communities may have different means by which they become motivated to participate in neighborhood improvement and offer a voice in local political processes. They may also have different perspectives of what is needed in the community. Within the present study, we were limited in our conclusions by our small non-random sample of youth recruited by a small number of youth partners with similar interests. For example, it is possible that our youth partners' interest in basketball led to recruitment of friends who have similar interests in basketball and thus it emerged that a primary desire in the

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neighborhood was for basketball courts. There may have been a variety of other interests and needs identified given a more diverse and unrelated sample of participants. Furthermore, this sample solely comprised African American youth from a midsized mid-western city and was more successful in engaging boys than girls. It has emerged in our study that male and female teens may have unique needs, desires, and contexts in which they feel comfortable participating and are heard by other youth, and so, may sometimes benefit from separate events and conversations differentially targeting their population. It will be important to explore in future work how both the method employed and outcomes yielded may vary for different populations of youth.

The Bristol Park neighborhood redevelopment is currently a highly relevant and polarized issue within the community and city at large. Open forums and City Council meetings have been met with community members' tears, angered voices, and emphatic suggestions for moving forward. However, youth have been absent, indifferent, or marginalized through misinformation or lack of information. Such uncertainty and misunderstanding of the redevelopment in the community of youth has fostered narratives of fear of what is to become of themselves and their families in this process. For example, youth leaders in the beginning of the project noted a narrative among youth that the redevelopment might be a means of taking away the opportunity for Black people to remain and thrive in their community because they were given a chance at community wellness and failed to execute it. This project provided an opportunity to rewrite this "tale of terror" into one of joy (Rappaport, 2000) for young people residing in this neighborhood and city. Through a youth-led space that drew on youth strengths and devised strategies for reducing barriers to youths' role in policy development, they were allowed to tell their own perspectives about their role in the community, which can be

disseminated to target adult audiences to be used in programming and policy as well as to other youth to inspire similar processes. They may tell narratives about their own role as leaders and activists and about how they have the capacity and drive to bring their community and city leaders together to foster positive structural change while preserving the neighborhood's strong sense of community.

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RESIDENT SURVEY

Age: _____   Race/Ethnicity:
_____

Gender (Circle one): Male Female   School:
_____

How many years have you lived in the Bristol Park neighborhood? Please circle one.
  a. Less than one year
  b. 1-2 years
  c. 3-5 years
  d. More than 5 years

What do you know about the Bristol Park Community? What do you know about the city's plan to redevelop that community? Please describe.

Where have you heard about or found information about the redevelopment? Please check all that apply.
  ____ Newspaper
  ____ TV
  ____ Website(s). Please specify _____-
  _____
  ____ Community forum(s) sponsored by the City of Champaign. Please specify:
  _____
  ____ Community forum(s) organized by community members. Please specify:
  _____
  ____ Other youth (friends or siblings)
  ____ Parents or other adult family members
  ____ Other adults (e.g. teachers, neighbors). Please
  specify:_____
  ____ Other. *Please specify*:
  _____

What are some changes that you've seen in the neighborhood since you've been living in Bristol Park? Please describe.

Why do you think the redevelopment is happening? Why do you think there are different plans for each Bristol Park neighborhood (Garwood, Bristol Place, and Shadow Wood) and what do you know about those plans?

If you have to relocate, what are your feelings about this?

What services or supports would be helpful for you and your family in the relocation process? Please check all that apply.
_____ Assistance with identifying churches in my new neighborhood
_____ Assistance with finding afterschool programs in my new neighborhood
_____ Youth employment
_____ Tutoring
_____ Planning for college
_____ Finding a mentor
_____ Other. *Please specify*:_____

What changes would you like to see in the new neighborhood? Please describe.

Which of the following would you like to see in the new neighborhood? Please check all that apply.

_____ Lights
_____ Bike paths
_____ Sidewalks
_____ Playgrounds
_____ Youth center
_____ Community center
_____ Sports facilities. Please specify sport(s)
_____
_____ Trashcans
_____ Computer lab
_____ Barbershop/Beauty salon
_____ Organized community activities (e.g. block parties, barbeques, community gardening etc).
     Please specify _____
_____ Fenced areas. *Please specify*:
_____
_____ Other. Please specify: _____

What do you like about the neighborhood that you would NOT want to see changed? Think of what you do there that is fun or makes you feel happy in your neighborhood. What do you do in your spare time?

If the city of community or community hosted a volunteer day, would you participate? Please circle one.
Yes   No
     Why or why not?

APPENDIX B

NONRESIDENT SURVEY

Age: _____   Race/Ethnicity:
_____

Gender (Circle one): Male Female   School:
_____

How many years have you lived in Champaign? Please circle one.
    e. Less than one year
    f. 1-2 years
    g. 3-5 years
    h. More than 5 years

How often do you visit the Bristol Park neighborhood?
    a. Almost everyday
    b. Only on the weekends
    c. A few times a month
    d. A few times a year
    e. Almost never

If you ever visit Bristol Park, what do you do when you go there? Please describe.

What do you know about the Bristol Park Community? What do you know about the city's plan to redevelop that community? Please describe.

Where have you heard about or found information about the redevelopment? Please check all that apply.
    ____ Newspaper
    ____ TV
    ____ Website(s). Please specify _____-
    _____
    ____ Community forum(s) sponsored by the City of Champaign. Please specify:
    _____
    ____ Community forum(s) organized by community members. Please specify:
    _____
    ____ Other youth (friends or siblings)
    ____ Parents or other adult family members
    ____ Other adults (e.g. teachers, neighbors). Please
specify:_____
    ____ Other. *Please specify*:
    _____

What are some changes that you've seen in Champaign since you've been living here? What are some changes you've noticed in Bristol Park since you've lived in Champaign? Please describe.

Why do you think the redevelopment is happening? Why do you think there are different plans for each Bristol Park neighborhood (Garwood, Bristol Place, and Shadow Wood) and what do you know about those plans?

Would you like to see people from Bristol Park visit your neighborhood? Please circle one: Yes No

Would you like to see people from Bristol Park move into your neighborhood? Please circle one: Yes No

Why or why not?

What changes would you like to see in the new Bristol Park neighborhood? What would attract you to visit or live in this neighborhood? Please describe.

Which of the following do you think would benefit people in the new neighborhood? Please check all that apply.

_____ Lights
_____ Bike paths
_____ Sidewalks
_____ Playgrounds
_____ Youth center
_____ Community center
_____ Sports facilities. Please specify sport(s)

_____
_____ Trashcans
_____ Computer lab
_____ Barbershop/Beauty salon
_____ Organized community activities (e.g. block parties, barbeques, community gardening etc).
        Please specify _____
_____ Fenced areas. *Please specify*:

_____
_____ Other. Please specify: _____

What is already attractive about the neighborhood that does NOT need to be changed? Think of what you do there that is fun or makes you feel happy when you visit or what seems nice there when you walk or ride past it.

If the city of community or community hosted a volunteer day, would you participate? Please circle one.
Yes   No
        Why or why not?