Engaging Youth as Co-Researchers: Exploring Collaborative Methods Aimed at Foregrounding Youth Voices

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Engaging youth as collaborative research partners in professional education research and evaluation requires careful attention to the complex power dynamics that emerge in the context of adult and youth partnerships (Teixeira, Augsberger, Richards-Schuster & Martinez, 2021). Recognizing youth as capable of investigating issues relevant to their lives and producing usable knowledge (Caraballo, Lozerski, Lysickt & Morrell, 2017; Tilley & Taylor, 2018) requires researchers to consider how and in what ways adult and youth enactment of participatory research methods could help mitigate dominant approaches to educational research that limit youth voice and authority.

This poster describes our exploration of this collaborative co-research process with youth co-researchers from three research studies aimed at centering and amplifying youth co-researcher perspectives and expertise within the context of two science museums and aims to contribute to our understanding of methods that support youth involvement in the research process.

### CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Objective</th>
<th>Case Study 1: Staying in Science</th>
<th>Case Study 2: APPRAISE Youth Advisors</th>
<th>Case Study 3: APPRAISE Youth Interns</th>
<th>Case Study 4: Teen Science Research &amp; Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of youth co-researchers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12 (2 cohorts of 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth ages</td>
<td>16-22</td>
<td>10-17</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>16-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment approach</td>
<td>All program participants were invited to apply; competitive hiring process</td>
<td>Coordinated with community partners; all interested youth could participate</td>
<td>Competitive hiring process through museum’s internship program</td>
<td>All program participants were invited to apply and all chose to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Compensation</td>
<td>$22/hr</td>
<td>$25/hr</td>
<td>$13/hr</td>
<td>What here?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MANIFESTING CARE

**How does the concept of care manifest in the collaborative co-research process?**

- Committing to partnering with youth
- Centering youth voice
- Recognizing youth as capable
- Investing in supports for youth and adults to work together
- Co-creating structures for co-researcher success
- Attending carefully to power dynamics
- Valuing audiences impacted by the research

### CROSS-CASE SYNTHESIS: CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTICE

#### Learning to work together

- Invest time for adults/youth to get to know each other and develop trust
- Articulate each person’s assets/ strengths related to contributing to the work
- For the youth researchers, make time to review basic tenets of social science research (justice, beneficence, respect) and rationale for commonly used data collection tools to create shared language and lay foundation

I always had a second adult research partner with me during youth advisors calls, so they could jump in and ask new questions or engage youth advisors in new ways when needed.

-Sarah, APPRAISE

I felt prepared/ supported in the work that I did because we often had work we did outside of meeting times that helped me come back to the group and have something meaningful to contribute or share.

-Lucie, Staying in Science

#### Structure, resources, and tools: Supporting youth co-researcher success

- Co-create ways of meeting/working together that honor everyone’s other commitments
- Create shared work spaces that youth can access
- Maintain consistency with meetings
- Use videoconferencing to accommodate different schedules/locations of youth and adult researchers

#### Power dynamics in youth-adult co-researcher relationships

- Both project design and meeting agendas need to center youth contributions/voice
- Project activities/timeline need to have built-in flexibility if youth contributions lead to shifts from original plan
- Article the “titles” and roles each member of team has and the associated tasks/responsibility/ power carries.

### REFERENCES