Engaging Youth as Partners in Research through the Creative Arts

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Presentation Overview

- Background

- Partnering with youth in research in research – knowledge transfer

- Integrated case examples

- Lessons learned

Background

- **Fine Arts**
  - Community arts and volunteering
  - Visual Voices project

- **After-school program coordinator**
  - Washington, DC 1990s
  - Health disparities by race, neighborhood and family violence, non-traditional expertise

- **Public Health**
  - Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (MPH, DrPH)
  - UNC Chapel Hill, Kellogg Community Health Scholars Program (2004-2006)

Research Background

- Risk and protective influence of social, environmental and institutional factors on health and health disparities (e.g., violence, childhood asthma, cancer)

- Exploring perceptions of and responses to urban youth violence

- Design and implementation of creative methods for engaging youth in research

- Integration of principles of community engagement through human services systems (e.g., homelessness, child welfare, school attendance)

Why engage youth in research?

Research suggests that the way youth are approached within the research process influences their capacity and willingness to participate in research (Levine, 2008; Zimmerman, 2005)
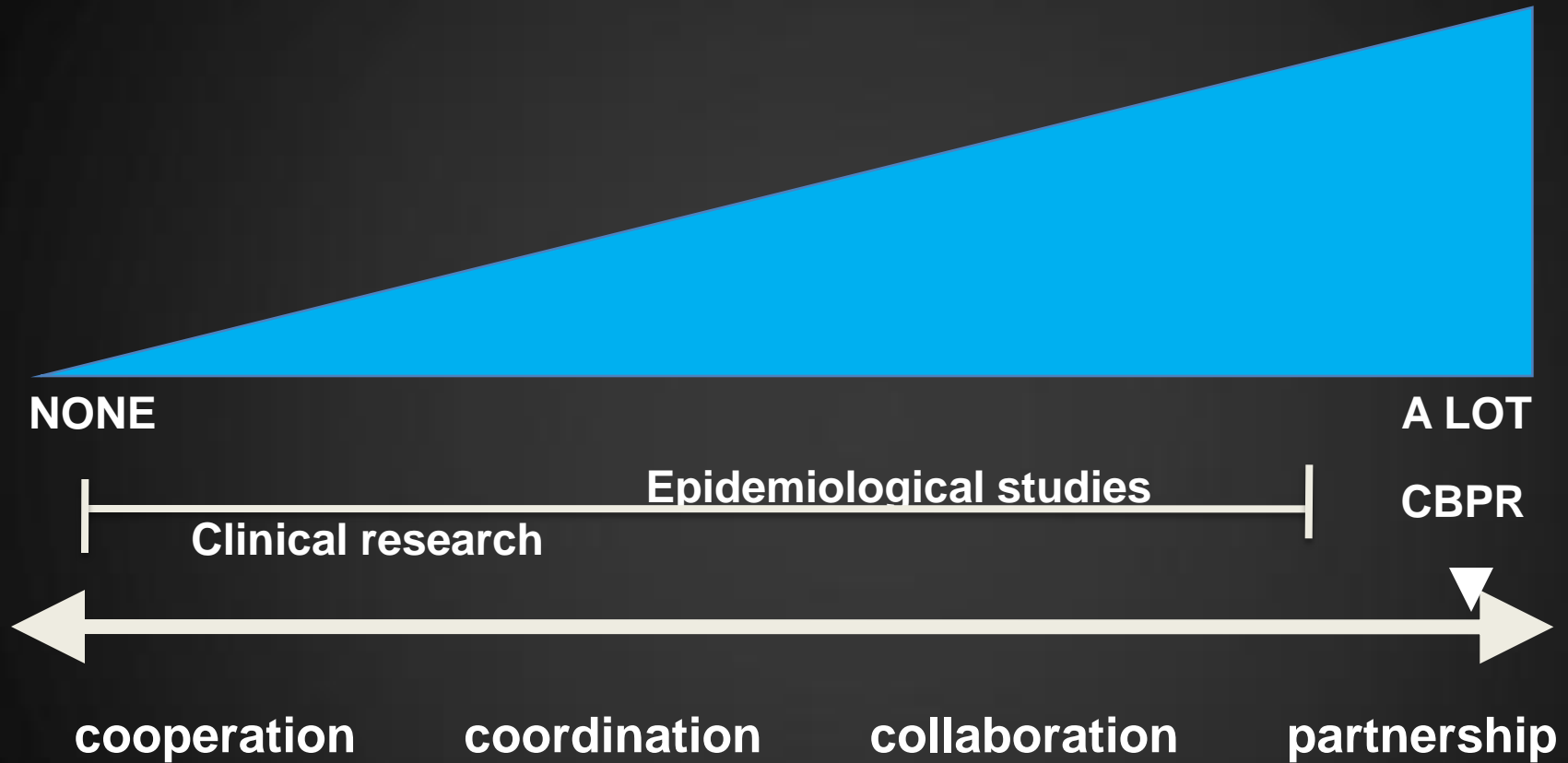
Involving youth as partners in the research process can be challenging
- varied cognitive and social phases of development (Piaget et al, 1973; Youniss et al, 1997; Levine, 2008)

Engaging youth requires an approach and methods which
- cultivate trust
- Nurture common expectations
- share ownership and decision making

Community input into research

NONE — A LOT

Epidemiological studies

CBPR

Clinical research

cooperation   coordination   collaboration   partnership

(Winer and Ray, 2000)

Knowledge transfer

The push model - involves academic researchers developing knowledge and implementing strategies to "push" their research toward stakeholders to use on their own

The pull model – involved users/stakeholders identify the research findings on their own

Integrated Knowledge Transfer (IKT) - involves building relationships among researchers and knowledge consumers to effectively allow for the equitable exchange of research information, ideas, and experiences for informing action (Reardon et al, 2006; Provvidena et al, 2009)

A partnership approach, as with CBPR, where stakeholders inform the focus, design, interpretation, dissemination and application of research for policy and practice decisions (KTE, 2007; Israel et al 1998)

Why the arts?

Artistic expression is universal to human culture throughout history (Clardy, 2000)

- The act of creating increases feelings of well-being and belonging
- Does not depend on language or education level (Kaplan, 2000)

Literature, music, painting photography are powerful tools for community organizing, and for health (McDonald, 1998; Chavez, 2004)

Its Fun!

Theory

Community organizing for health must begin with people's reality

- – Central to that reality is existing culture (Ardones and Vanolli, 1995)

The arts may promote health through –

- – The Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1990)
- – Social Learning Theory (Perry et. al., 1990)
- – Critical Consciousness Theory (Freiri 1970, Wang 2003, Wang and Burris, 1994)
  - • Use of pictures and visual imagery was integral to this process
- – Cultivating self-efficacy, social support and collective awareness (McDonald, et al, 2005)

Integrating the past and present through the arts with research...

- A little history...

History- Visual Voices

- Started in 1993 in Pittsburgh, PA;

- Currently, the Visual Voices project would be more than 3500 feet in length and has involved the combined efforts of over 1800 youth from nine cities between the ages of 5 and 18;

- Focused on exploring neighborhood strengths and challenges through the arts.

Pittsburgh, PA

Participatory data collection with youth

Four projects designed to explore the perceptions of youth regarding community factors on health, violence and community and school bullying prevention.

- SITE 1: Baltimore, MD in the Summer of 2007 funded by the Center for Injury Research and Policy at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (Grant No. R49 CE00198)

- SITE 2: Pittsburgh, PA in the Fall of 2008 funded by the University of Pittsburgh Clinical and Translational Science Institute. (Grant No. UL1 RR024153)

- SITE 3: Siler City, NC. 2008 MPH Thesis – Rebecca Davis, UNC Department of Health Behavior and Health Education.

- Site 4: Pittsburgh, PA. Community Human Services, Corp. Grable Foundation (2012)

Visual Voices - **METHODS**
Relationship building

Pittsburgh, PA

Warm-up activity…

SESSIONS (3-8)

Session 1: Introduction to Visual Voices

Session 2: Hopes and dreams for the future

Sessions 3-5: Focal topic (painting)

Sessions 6 -7: Focal topic (writing)

Session 8: "Becoming agents of change" design and exhibition of work
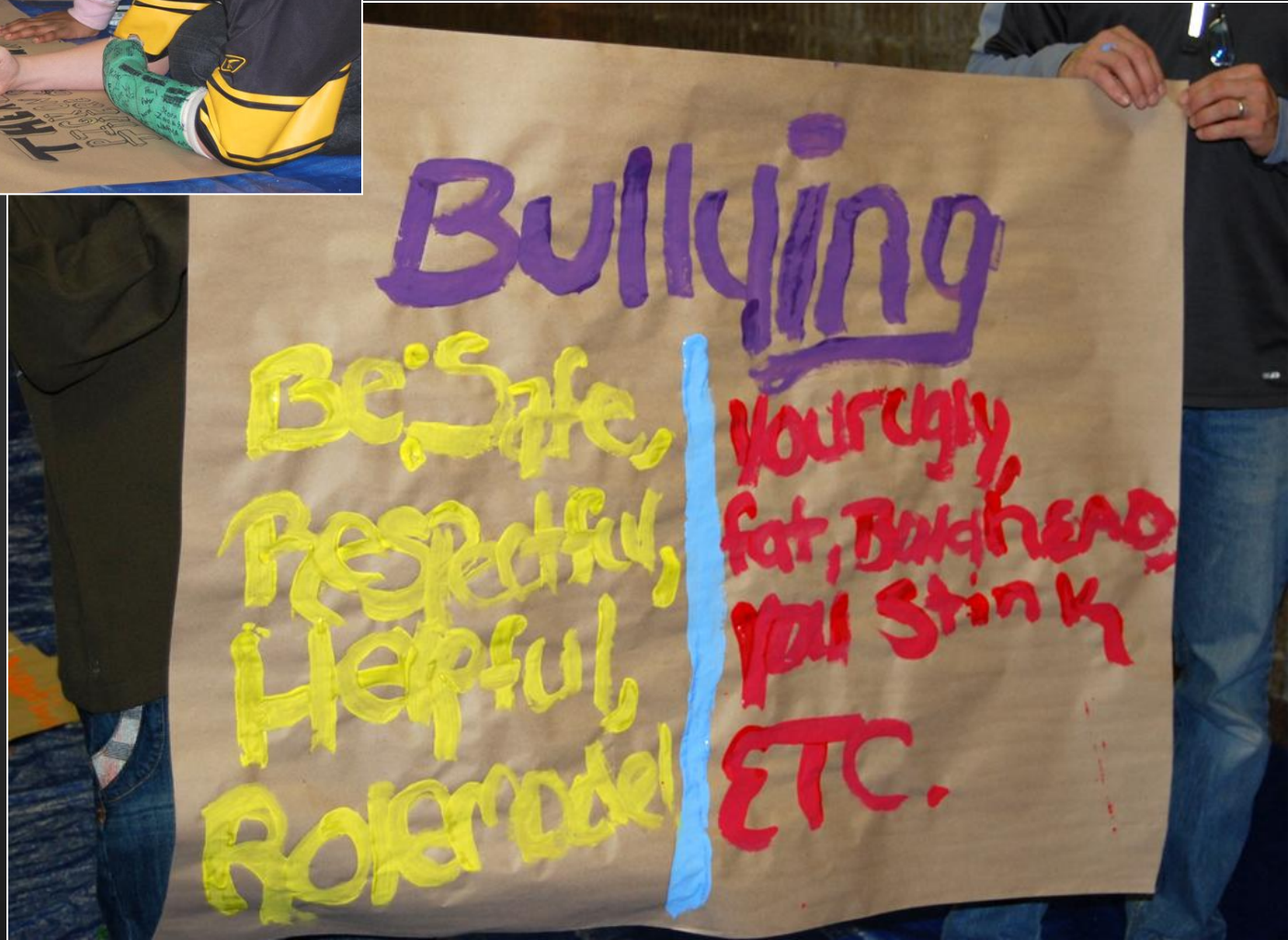
Creative Painting Sessions

Group Discussion/Critique

Critique example

Pittsburgh, PA

Writing/Drawing Sessions

Pittsburgh, PA

Siler City, NC

Final Exhibit

Pittsburgh, PA
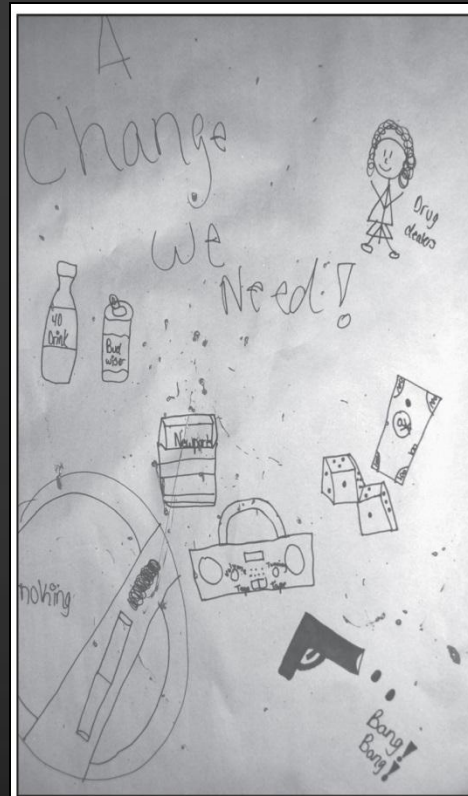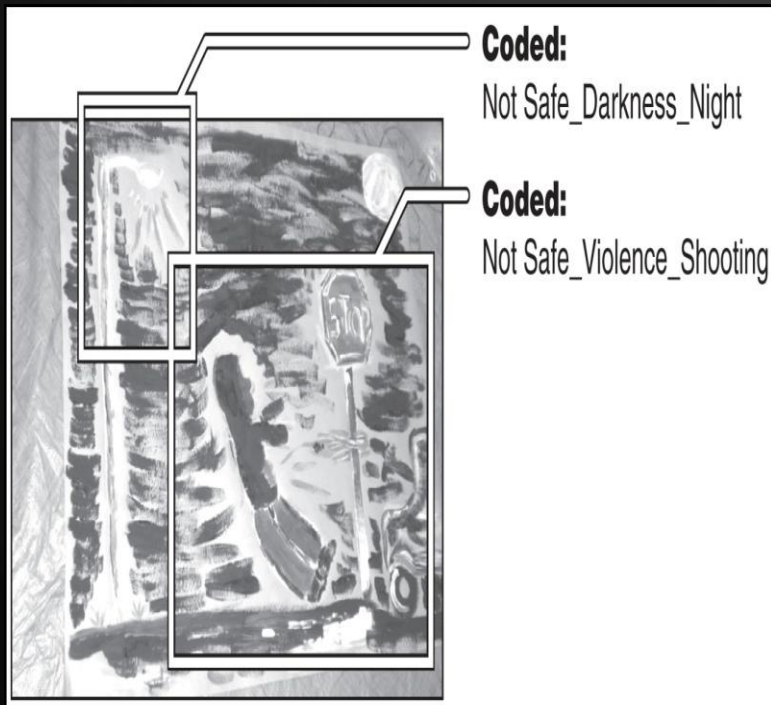
Pittsburgh, PA

Washington, DC

Research method - data analysis

• Paintings, writings, drawing s and transcripts of critique sessions are coded

•Qualitative data sources (text and images) are iteratively reviewed, analyzed and thematic statements generated with partners

Coded:
Not Safe_Darkness_Night

Coded:
Not Safe_Violence_Shooting

Child 1: guns are bad too

M: Is that something that concerns you too? Or is this an issue?

Child 1: gambling is bad too because somebody can get mad and end up killing you.

M: okay so gambling, so what else do we have?

Child 2: if you're drunk you might umm… wait… act crazy and end up killing somebody when you're drunk.

M: so lets ask Jarleen what she was thinking when she did the piece

Jarleen (painter): ….that boombox means like there is loud (bad?) music

Jarleen (painter): not all music…if you drink causes you to do bad stuff and I know a lot of people like that.

Exploring Community Health, Safety and Violence Prevention

PARTICIPANTS

Summary from youth partners from the four locations

- Sites:
  - Pittsburgh, PA (2)
  - Baltimore MD
  - Siler City, NC

- After-school programs offered by community-based organizations, churches, human services agency

- The four groups of youth, ages ranged from 8-16

Siler City, NC

Pittsburgh, PA

Pittsburgh, PA

Baltimore, MD

Social Networks

- Safety was found in social networks
  - *"what I like about Sandtown is how people always lookin' out for you."* – *(*Baltimore youth)

- Family and friends are their favorite people
  - *"I [heart] my family. The reason why these are my favorite people. Because they always love me. And they been there for me. And they never doubt me. That's why these are my favorite people."* – (Pittsburgh youth)

Street lighting

- Poor street and alley lighting as unsafe and dangerous places
  - *"drive by shootings, right, it comes across my mind when you walk outside."* – (Baltimore youth)

Abandoned houses

- Abandoned houses unsafe for both structural and contextual reasons.
  - *"people like go in abandoned houses and it's not safe...[there are] broken steps, they do drugs there... leaving needles."* – (Baltimore youth)

Immigration

Siler City, NC

"...(The artist) put the American flag and the Mexico flag and the door to a better world and stuff, stuff like that...She just used two colors, just black and white and it made it like really stand out a whole lot...its really cool! – Group critique (Siler City, NC)

Conflict between cultures

Perception of conflict, gang conflict, between Latino and African American youth in Siler City .

- **Interviewer**: *"Can you tell us again about your painting?"*

- **Participants:** *"Yeah, uh, [the painting] was just about me and T, like, it looks like we're fighting but we're just really being friends, that's how we get along."*
    - (one Latino and one African American youth working together, Siler City, NC)

Siler City, NC

Construction

"Cultures United"

Dissemination Forums

+ permanent
community
exhibits

Pittsburgh, PA

Siler City teens participate in project to call attention to gangs, youth issues

March 2007

By Milburn Gibbs, story originally published in the *Chatham News/Chatham Record* (photos added to website)

Some Siler City "of promise" youth are doing projects designed to voice their concerns about drugs, violence, racism and boredom and turn them into better places - by their own bootstraps.

Their goal is to change their neighborhoods and foster their own potential as productive citizens.

The Siler City 4-H club and Teen Coalition for Family Peace have been active in the community since last summer. 4-H leader and Chatham County Together! AmeriCorps volunteer recruiter, Tracy McInturff, says "we've got to provide opportunities for these kids so that they don't make destructive decisions with their free time. Art is one of many ways to talk about what's going on in their lives in a casual, fun setting. The results are amazing and sometimes shocking – adults need to pay attention to what's going here and now and empower these kids to rise up." From a similar perspective, the Teen Coalition and Awareness Task Force leader, Manuel Colorado quotes "our youth suffer the consequences of domestic violence and it is our mission to stop the reproduction of it. We train them as leaders so that they can reach out to other teens, learn to trust each other and start healthy relationships with each other and with girls. We are happy to take part in the Visual Voices project and let the kids paint what they feel." Colorado primarily serves teenage boys ages 12-18 in all parts of the county.

After months of discussion – discovering problems and strengths in their community – the kids decided that some fun was in order. In late October last year, UNC Professor Michael Yonas

- Public exhibitions designed with and by youth and agency partners

- Newspaper articles involving youth to inform community and law enforcement

Examples of health addressed

- Social and Environmental Influences on Childhood asthma (2012)

- Healthy relationships/dating violence (2011-2012)

- Community bullying awareness and prevention (2011)

- Gender identity and transformation with teen boys (Spring 2014, Miller E, PI))

  - Examine "masculinity" concepts among middle and high school age males (ages 11-17) to identify shared beliefs and practices that constitute "local cultures of masculinity."

  - to inform gender specific prevention health promotion and violence prevention programs

Visual Voices as an arts-based participatory research method

- engages youth and facilitates equitable involvement

- shared vulnerability

- culturally relevant knowledge generation and transfer

- generates positive and negative topics of interest from their lived experience

- permits individual and group processing

- lays the groundwork for relationships to develop between the academic researchers and the community participants.

- That is also, FUN

- Limitations…
- Strengths…

Questions!

THANK YOU!!

Antionette, age 8

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