"It's a puzzle!" Elementary School-Aged Youth Concept-Mapping the Intersections of Community Narratives[1]

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Abstract: We present a concept-mapping activity, developed within a youth Participatory Action Research (yPAR) after-school program, to demonstrate how the activity contributed to young people's conceptualization of social structures as interconnected. We analyze fieldnotes from the Change 4 Good yPAR program, which includes primarily Latina/o 4th and 5th grade students attending a California public elementary school. We discuss the concept-mapping activity in terms of its processes and outcomes, and how youth constructed interconnected meanings from thematic community narratives.

Keywords: yPAR; curriculum; children; structural thinking

1 Introduction

Youth Participatory Action Research (yPAR) provides young people with empowering opportunities because it is a research paradigm and method of critical inquiry that engages their lives and experiences (Cammarota/ Fine 2008). Empowerment, within this paradigm, is defined as having control over material and psychological resources, as well as decision-making that affect one's life (Rappaport, 1995). Although beneficial to young people (Gaventa/Cornwall, 2001), yPAR is often relegated to out-of-school time because of the explicit political focus (Cammarota, personal communication, 5/17/13). In yPAR, young people often collect and analyze data from their community to help them determine an action designed to bring about socially just change. As a methodology and epistemology that is becoming more prevalent in psychology, education, and public health across the globe, yPAR can provide enriching learning experiences for young people. Indeed, yPAR is growing

in popularity, yet there is little research on pedagogical methods that assist with yPAR processes and subsequent critical literacy development.

The dearth of pedagogical methods for use with yPAR prompted Venezuelan social-community psychologist Martiza Montero (2009) to encourage researchers to develop methods that engage cultural narratives in the service of social transformation. Hence, we present a "concept-mapping" pedagogical activity that facilitates young people's conceptualization of social structures. In doing so, we address the following research question: How does concept-mapping contribute to young people's understanding of structural and intersectional connections among thematic community narratives? To examine this question, we analyze fieldnotes from Change 4 Good, a yPAR after-school program in California (U.S.) that serves a group of fourth and fifth grade students who are predominantly Latina/o.

In the sections that follow, we provide the theoretical foundation for our work. We discuss yPAR and its theoretical links to problematization. Next, we discuss the current study and how concept-mapping enabled young people to discern social problems and their interconnections across different themes that emerged from their experiences and community narratives. Finally, we conclude with implications.

2   YPAR as an Epistemology

yPAR can facilitate the process of uncovering "truths" that are founded on the experiences of "the Other" or subordinated groups (Cammarota/Fine 2008). The core process is identification of a social problem, as well as the structural or social conditions that allow for the social problem to exist. Through this process, yPAR allows for the problematizing of hegemony that shapes people's actions and views of the world, as well as their capacity to transform it (Fals Borda 1980).

One approach to critically assessing the conditions and existence of social problems, and therefore challenging the normalized explanations that reify them, is problematization (Freire 1970/1988). Through problematizing, people situate their "social condition" – or problems – within a structural analysis of the circumstances that led to the normalizing of the problem. The problematizing process often begins with a "trigger" that elicits both a cognitive and emotional response (Montero 2009). This reaction leads one to question or participate in critical dialogue with others, in a form of critical engagement, such as sharing narratives (e.g., stories, feelings, beliefs). These narratives become symbolic representations that can lead to further dialogue or problematizing questions that challenge naturalized explanations.

Considering yPAR, few pedagogical methods to facilitate problematization have been empirically examined. One approach that has been, however, is a systematic problem-posing activity called the *5 Whys* (Kohfeldt/Langhout 2012). In an illustration of this method, fourth and fifth grade students in an after-school program identified the root causes to a social problem. Through iteratively asking questions, students moved from a deficit-based explanation of a social problem (e.g., toilets are not flushed because students are lazy) to a structural problem definition of a broader

social issue in their school (e.g., students do not feel in control of school property because they do not have a lot of freedom at school).

Once problem definition is set in yPAR, youth collect data to assess the problem and analyze it. One of the few pedagogical tools that has been empirically examined for helping youth analyze qualitative data is the Youth ReACT (Research Actualizing Critical Thought) method (Foster-Fishman/Law/Lichty/Aoun 2010). In a demonstrative study, sixth and seventh graders engaged in a series of systematic activities during out-of-school time. Activities included a candy sort and message scavenger hunt to help young people learn how to analyze qualitative data. In the candy sort, youth worked in small groups and were given different types of candy. They were told they owned a shop and to sort the candy into a fixed number of piles to help customers find their choices. After a specified time, all groups explained their sorting process. Each group was then told that they lost shelf space and needed to re-sort their candy into fewer groups. They again explained their sorting rationale. These activities taught students about category and thematic construction. Afterward, they grouped narrative data (or music lyrics, newspaper articles, etc.) in a message scavenger hunt, where they identified key messages and then sorted these messages (like they did with the candy). Through these activities, young people were able to analyze their data and present a story about their community through an analysis of systematically identified social problems (Foster-Fishman et al. 2010).

These activities empirically assess pedagogical methods that facilitate young people's development of a structural analysis of social problems, but these yPAR examinations have not highlighted the interconnections among social problems or conditions. Unfortunately, few pedagogical methods exist that explicitly help young people explore how a particular social issue intersects with others. Yet, these intersections are essential if children are to develop an understanding or a shared narrative of how social issues connect to one another, as well as underlying structural conditions (Cole/Bruner 1971; Martín-Baró 1994; Montero 2009). Indeed, if social problems are to be remedied, a structural analysis of interconnecting conditions must be explored in order to shift the theory of change (Dussel 2007; Ryan 1972). This is, essentially, the process of problematization and de-ideologization (Dussel 2007; Martín-Baró 1994), or deconstructing the world by deconstructing the word (Cronmiller 2007; Freire 1970/1988; Freire/Macedo 1987; Hull 1993; Hull/Schultz 2001). Through this structural analysis, different possibilities arise for righting the world (Martín-Baró 1994).

As yPAR researchers, we begin to address this gap in the empirical literature by assessing a concept-mapping pedagogical method. In developing this activity, we drew from Montero (2009), who emphasized the democratization of knowledge by situating the practice of critical thinking within historical, political, cultural and social contexts. Our study seeks to contribute to the field of yPAR by expanding the approaches available to help scaffold young people's understanding of interconnected social structures. This is an important endeavor because understanding how social structures are interconnected helps people, in their telling of narratives, connect to their lived experiences. Having control over emerging community narratives is an important psychological resource and therefore a form of empowerment (Rappaport, 1995).

3   Current Study

This study assesses the use of concept-mapping as a pedagogical method for elementary school-aged youth within a yPAR after-school setting. We examine the ways in which a concept-mapping activity can serve to further facilitate interconnections of structural conditions during the young people's data analysis phase of the PAR cycle. Although some other methods and activities for organizing data with youth have been proposed, such as the ReACT activities (e.g. candy sorting and message scavenger hunt), these could be complemented by activities that further facilitate structural examinations, such as concept-mapping. Concept-mapping scaffolds youth's ability to examine relations between thematic community narratives through a structural intersectional process that involves making theme connections that focus on problem definition, social structures, and solutions.

4   Method

4.1   Setting

Maplewood Elementary School[3] serves as the setting for this study. The school provides pre-kindergarten through fifth grade education to approximately 400 California students, 84% of whom are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. Regarding ethnicity, approximately 75% of the students are Latina/o, 13% are white, 3% are African American, 2% belong to a different ethnic or mixed-ethnic group, and 7% did not report an ethnicity. Approximately 64% of the students are designated English learners (California Department of Education 2013).

After-school Program. The Change 4 Good yPAR program is a weekly seventy-minute after-school program coordinated by the Community Psychology Research & Action Team (CPRAT), which is affiliated with a nearby public university, and it is part of a broader network called University-Community Links. The goal of the program is to teach youth how to conduct action research and, through that process, create an empowering setting that facilitates critical literacy and provides the youth with the skills and resources necessary for addressing issues they find important within their school and community.

At the time of this study, Change 4 Good consisted of 22 fourth and fifth grade youth/participants (ages 9–11) from Maplewood Elementary School. Twelve were female and 10 were male; 16 were Latina/o, 3 were White, and 3 were of mixed ethnicity (African American and Latino, African American and White, and Cuban and Filipino). The program was supervised by one faculty advisor and coordinated by two graduate students and nine undergraduate research assistants (RAs). Our research team was primarily female (75%) and Latina/o (42%), but also White (33%), Asian American (17%), and Armenian American (8%). The school-collaborator – a

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3   All proper names have been changed.

white female literacy specialist – also attended most sessions and participated in the planning of weekly lessons by providing feedback, offering developmentally-appropriate teaching strategies, and acting as a school liaison.

4.2   Project Overview

To contextualize the concept-mapping activity, we first provide an overview of the program and project. Change 4 Good follows a yPAR model, which consists of four phases: 1) problem definition, 2) data collection and analysis, 3) action, and 4) evaluation. Each year's curriculum changes according to the phase of the program and the particular research interests of the youth. We made the strategic decision to build each year's curriculum by continuing and elaborating on activities from the previous year. Our curricular choices are informed by research indicating that this type of building is more likely to lead to traction, action, and change (Ozer et al. 2013).

At the time of this study, the youth were in the second phase of their yPAR process. This means that the youth had identified an issue they wanted to address, which was that a previous school-based mural they had created did not represent the stories and experiences of the broader school and community. As a result, they decided to create a second mural that would incorporate a more diverse representation of school/community experiences and stories in order for more people to feel more connected to the school. The youth decided on a method of data collection (focus groups) and endeavoured in the second phase – data collection and analysis - of their process. We focus on this phase because it serves as the foundation for the themes the youth engaged with during the concept-mapping activity.

Focus Group Data Collection. Between summer 2011 and winter 2012, the youth collected data to help them discern themes and images to represent in their school mural. Consistent with a yPAR process, a previous cohort of youth in the program had decided on a focus group prompt that they would use to gather community narratives: "Tell me a story about a time when you had the power or didn't have the power to make a change in your community." Upon deciding the prompt, the youth conducted a total of eight focus groups with teachers, school staff, parents and community members, including school peers and other youth. All focus groups were youth-led and facilitated.

Focus Group Data Analysis. In order to analyze their data, the youth engaged in a clustering and coding process, which included a variation of the ReACT candy sort and messaging activities (Foster-Fishman et al. 2010). The youth first did the candy sort to learn about category and thematic construction before engaging in a line-by-line coding process that consisted of going through notes of each story told during the focus groups and circling words or phrases that they thought were significant. They then compiled, sorted, and narrowed down a list of words that represented the stories gathered from the focus groups. This then served as their themes. Throughout this process, the youth engaged in several continuous iterations of data collection and coding, as well as discussions about what each theme meant in relation to the community narratives (stories) derived from their focus groups. The final outcome of this inductive coding process resulted in twelve themes (i.e. *diversity, safety, resources,*

history, opportunities, powerlessness, struggle, education, school, community, love, and *communication*), each with its own narrative-based description (e.g. Safety *can be possible by having more knowledge about gangs and how members of gangs can recruit youth, and how violence and crime can lead to unsafe communities*) (Appendix A).

Once all data were collected and analyzed, and themes and theme descriptions discerned, the youth were introduced to a concept-mapping activity to explore the interconnections across and within themes. This activity is the primary focus of our analysis.

4.3   Concept-Mapping Analysis

In addition to facilitating program activities and directly engaging with the youth, all CPRAT members wrote ethnographic fieldnotes as participant observers (Emerson/Fretz/Shaw 1995). The fieldnotes were written shortly after each session and consisted of descriptive accounts of the day's activities and discussions during the after-school program.

Data analysis for the concept-mapping activity was conducted via consensus coding by the three authors of this paper, all of whom have insider knowledge of the after-school program. In order to assess our research question – how does concept-mapping contribute to young people's understanding of structural and intersectional connections among thematic community narratives – we analyzed the fieldnotes for the day on which the youth did the concept-mapping activity. Specifically, we coded for instances during the activity in which the youth engaged in particular theme assessment processes (i.e., making connections to themes based on narratives from focus group data, narratives about personal experiences of individual youth, or narratives about the community not derived from focus group data); meta-narrative construction (i.e., making connections between multiple themes); and different levels of analyses (i.e., assessments of social problems as structural or individual).[4] Multiple codes could be assigned to each instance of theme engagement, and disagreements in coding were settled through discussion until all three coders reached agreement.

In the following results section, we discuss the concept-mapping activity in more detail, both in terms of process and outcomes.

5   Results and Discussion

The concept-mapping activity was used to facilitate the youth's process of organizing their experiences, the stories (focus group data) they collected and analyzed, and the themes they discerned from their data. By allowing connections to be built between themes, rather than merely clustered and merged into standalone meta-themes,

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4   Codebook available upon request.

concept-mapping allows for narratives regarding the interrelatedness of social issues to be retained, and thereby also sets the stage for a more nuanced structural analysis to develop.

The concept-mapping activity we discuss utilized the youth's familiarity with the previous sorting and coding activities. First, pieces of paper with each individual theme and its narrative-based description were taped onto candy bars and laid out on a table in front of the youth (see Figure 1 and the end of this article). Research team members then asked the youth to arrange the themes based on the ways they related to one another, and to explain the connections to the group (see Appendix A). The youth took turns reading each theme and its description out loud and engaged in dialogical conversations with one another, describing why and how each theme was interconnected to others (see Figure 2). To demonstrate this process, we provide the following fieldnote of the youth's initial engagement with the themes:

Bruno (5th grade student) said he wanted to explain the connection. He chose Safety, Love and Communication. He asked, "How do I start?" Jesica (graduate student) asked, "Why do safety and love connect?" Bruno said, "Love is connected to Safety… Communication is connected to both because Safety can lead to … we need each other to exist." Bruno sounded a little frustrated and said, "It's hard." Jesica said he could explain it in Spanish. Angel (5th grade student) said that he could help him, and Bruno nodded his head. Angel said, "Look Bruno!" as he put Safety and Communication next to each other, and then Love on top of them. Santiago (4th grade student) said, "It's a puzzle!" (Fieldnote 5/31/2012)

The fieldnote shows how Bruno attempts to articulate a connection between the themes *love*, *safety* and *communication*. In the course of his explanation he becomes frustrated because he realizes that the connections he is trying to make are much broader in that they involve more than one connection between two themes. In his closing remark, he states that "we need each other to exist," thereby making reference to relational aspects of community building, based on safety and communication. In his attempt to help, Angel suggests that *love* is the glue that sustains a collective community based on *communication*, or transparency, and *safety*, as accountability to one another.

Problem definition. During the activity, the students initially organized themes related to problem definition. Themes were therefore organized to conceptualize a problem or condition through structural analyses of the interconnections within certain themes. For example, the following fieldnote demonstrates how two students connected several themes to illustrate a structural problem, inequality:

Bruno struggled to read, "Opportunities that are just and fair, and do not perpetuate the racism, ageism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism." [...] Angel then explained that the themes "diversity" and "opportunities" could go together due to the need for equality. Angel then read, "Powerlessness can lead to helplessness and sadness, as well as poverty and hunger." He added that this theme [powerlessness] could also connect with "opportunities" and "diversity" because some groups may not get some opportunities. (Fieldnote 5/31/2012)

In this example, the students' analysis of the root problem is not individual effort, but social inequities, and the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in a community. According to Angel, *diversity* and *opportunities* are connected because different social groups struggle for equality. In connecting these themes, Angel explicitly recognized that people experience opportunities differently across dimensions of race, class, gender, sexuality, age and ableness. This is consistent with

literature suggesting that children from a very early age are aware of social categories, such as race, gender and class, and that these social categories have different implications for how people are treated and their life experiences (Chafel 2008). Furthermore, in saying that "*diversity* and *opportunities* could go together due to the need for equality," Angel made the structural association that equality is related to access to opportunities. Angel implied that diversity should not be an impediment to accessing opportunities, and, therefore, equality. Regardless of diversity, equal opportunities should be afforded to all. These connections are structural as well as intersectional because the young people linked the themes, as well as the broader context in which the themes unfolded.

Similarly, in another example, Bruno made structural connections to power and powerlessness as he attempted to operationalize "powerlessness."

Bruno pondered the categorization of "powerlessness", as well. He spoke in Spanish, "Communication, love, and safety are about having power. But powerlessness is about not having power." Angel thought about it intensely. He put his hands on his head and squinted his eyes, as he became deep in thought. Eventually, the students decided that it would be best to categorize "powerlessness" and "struggle" because people without power tend to struggle more. (Fieldnote 5/31/2012)

Bruno's structural understanding of powerlessness as not having power is connected to the experiences of people who struggle to be heard, be loved, and feel safe. In this way, Bruno suggested that people without power – those who are silenced, oppressed and disenfranchised – tend to struggle more, perhaps because social structures are not set up to support communication, love and safety for some communities. In a follow up discussion, however, Joey (4th grader) states, "the two themes [*powerlessness* and *struggle*] can also relate to *opportunities* which can help avoid *struggle* and *powerlessness*." It was finally determined that *powerlessness* and *struggle* are interconnected with *opportunities* and *diversity*, which were together in another pile. These connections are consistent with bell hook's and Frerie's writings on love as the foundation for social change and action, of working against domination, and therefore oppression, through a practice of love, or an "ethic of love," that is encompassing of listening to one another empathically, recognizing the humanity of all, and living in community (Freire 1970/1988; hooks 1994).

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that problems, such as structural inequality and powerlessness, are rooted within social structures, and not individuals and their merit. In seeing *opportunities* and *diversity* connected, yet also interconnecting these themes with *powerlessness* and people's *struggle*, the young people co-constructed a narrative around power as something that must be taken, which is consistent with theories of power (Freire 1970/1988). Hence, their problem definition consisted of viewing powerlessness as socially and structurally interconnected with other themes, which are rooted in their experiences and derived from community narratives they had gathered through focus groups. Indeed, this dual process of critically interpreting and giving meaning to the social world and what can be done to transform it, is central to a critical thinking process that strives toward a more just society (Morrell 2002).

Social structures. With concept-mapping, themes are linked and connected without necessarily being consolidated into a meta-theme. This allows each theme to

stand on its own in representing an important issue while also challenging youth to think more broadly and structurally about the interconnectedness of social problems. For example, in the following fieldnote, Santiago is attempting to make a connection between *school* and *education*:

Santiago continued his point by saying, "School goes with Education because, it's the same--and Community, wait! Resources and School [go together] because Education and school resources come together because people support..." It seemed like Santiago was having a tough time connecting the themes so he was thinking out loud about the connections. Jesica (graduate student) encouraged him to keep going until he got it. He continued by saying, "If people get education and knowledge, they can get a job and work. History is pretty much like before. We read about history in education." (Fieldnote 5/31/2012)

Santiago initially views *education* and *school* in relation to *community*. Yet in the course of his explanation, Santiago identifies school *resources* as central to the sustenance of *education*. He explains that school resources are made possible through people's support of *education*, which pulls from the community narratives the youth gathered that focused on acquiring more resources for the school, as well as instances where people came together in the community to organize resources for themselves. Santiago concludes that education affords people several experiences that enable them to pursue a career or employment, thereby viewing *resources*, *education*, *school* and *community* as interconnected, and mutually reinforcing. Angel then assists Santiago by listing *history*, *education* and *school* together with *resources* and *community* in a different pile.

In another example Angel makes similar structural connections by linking *diversity* and *struggle*. The following fieldnote demonstrates his process:

The next pile was Powerlessness and Struggle. Angel said, "trying to fight for peace in the world... or maybe, let's see another." Angel continued, "Diversity and Struggle come together because people struggle to be treated equally." (Fieldnote 5/31/2012)

Angel associates *diversity* and *struggle* with structural barriers toward equality. Diversity, characterized by differences in race, class, gender, sex, age, ableness and other social statuses, as well as differences in worldviews, is situated in relation to people struggling or fighting for rights. This structural connection is reinforced by other research demonstrating children's understanding of rights as privileges that are unequally distributed, and therefore people must engage in movements to demand rights (Solis, 2003).

Solutions. Amidst the process of unraveling structural problem definitions with themes as the basic unit of analysis, the students were better equipped to offer solutions that were more structural in addressing the causes of social issues. For example, in the following fieldnote, one student engaged with the theme of *love*, and offered it as a means for increasing *safety*:

Angel read, "Love can give others hope that there can be peace in the world." Angel decided that the themes Safety and Love should be placed together because Love and peace can lead to Safety. (Fieldnote 5/31/2012)

Although the narrative-based description for *love* does not explicitly mention *safety*, Angel made a connection between the two themes. To be specific, Angel framed *love* as a pathway to *safety* – *love* is conceptualized as a method for enacting liberation or

peace (Sandoval 2000; Freire 1970/2000), which creates *safety*. In this vein, *safety* is conceptualized to mean community wellness, as well as transformative healing that is founded upon an ethic of love that encompasses caring for one another (hooks 1994).

Angel later adds that "peace and *safety* lead to a *community*" (Fieldnote 5/31/2012) while arranging the pieces for *safety* and *community* on the table. Although *safety* was already connected with *love* and *communication,* it was not limited from analysis with other themes. *Safety*, therefore, could be connected without necessarily being merged with *community*. Through this process, we could see that the concept-mapping activity allows space for the youth to build an intricate relational map with the community narratives they had collected – space that was not afforded by the previous clustering and coding activities. Furthermore, youth were able to examine the ways in which the themes and community-related social issues were structurally interconnected, whilst offering solutions that addressed these issues on a structural level in the process:

Angel read another: "Community is the joining and coming together of people to help families and schools to learn about one another, especially to learn about the different cultures that make up the community." Angel seemed to be very invested in this activity. He also related Community to Resources because if people in a community work together there would be more resources to obtain. (Fieldnote 5/31/2012)

Angel connected *community* – specifically, collective action – to the gaining of material resources. By conceptualizing social action as *community*, Angel offered it as a solution to addressing the structural lack of access to resources. Collective social action, in this view, relates to changing the boundaries of political participation, or freedom, to bring about social structural change (Ginwright/James 2002).

The concept-mapping activity explicitly asked youth to make structural connections between and within themes. In doing so, the youth were able to think about the interconnectedness of social issues, and therefore discern structural problem definitions and identify structural solutions. In examining their concept map, this more structural analysis becomes clear. First, connections are not unidirectional. Second, all themes except *powerlessness* now have multiple connections. In this mapping, *struggle* is not only related to *powerlessness*, but also *opportunities*, and indirectly to *history* (see Figure 3). These connections make visible other ways to right the world that are more structural, yet also built upon community narratives.

6　　Conclusions and Implications

Our motivation for this research stems from our desire to contribute to the developing field of yPAR with children of elementary school-age, a group often overlooked by yPAR researchers and practitioners. We offer an activity that can support empowering opportunities for them to engage in research and intervention, while facilitating their critical and structural analyses development.

Although we recognize that not all activities or practices within the Change 4 Good program can apply to all contexts and settings, this example can serve as a

case study for those engaging in similar work with other young people. We think this activity is especially relevant for groups positioned to have narratives written *about them* instead of *by them*. These groups include (but are not limited to) subordinated groups such as the working class, people of color, indigenous people, and im/migrants, in the United States and internationally.

The concept-mapping activity is especially relevant to these groups because it provides ideas for actions that address structural barriers. In our case, the concept-mapping activity helped young people develop visual symbols and images that depicted interconnected community stories, which were then represented in their school-based mural. The concept-mapping activity is a tool that engages young people in making connections between structural issues; however, more pedagogical tools and practices that facilitate this process into the action and evaluations stages of the yPAR process are needed. More research must be conducted to develop structured activities that facilitate young people's skills toward implementing actions and evaluating their research outcomes. The concept-mapping activity we have introduced is a contribution to this nascent movement on conducting yPAR with children in ways that facilitate and legitimize their participation.

The concept-mapping activity builds on the ReACT activities to assist youth in organizing qualitative data (Foster-Fishman et al. 2010). To further complement the ReACT activities, concept-mapping allows youth to do more than cluster data - it allows them to determine links between (multiple) thematic clusters and to maintain these links within an interwoven network of connected themes that facilitate critical thinking and discussion of larger structural narratives. For example, although line-by-line coding of focus group data helps youth cluster messages about violence and gangs together to form an overarching theme about *safety*, concept-mapping allows youth to link the theme of *safety* with other related themes such as *love* and *community*, which themselves may be linked to other themes such as *diversity*. Instead of being incorporated into a larger cluster, each theme stands on its own while sharing multiple links to other themes – thus forming a relational map that further challenges youth to think about the structural complexities within social issues, instead of viewing issues as isolated stories. This process allows for direct structural analyses that builds on youth's data and can further aid in the fostering of critical consciousness and actions that transform the world.

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Figure 1. Concept-Mapping Activity
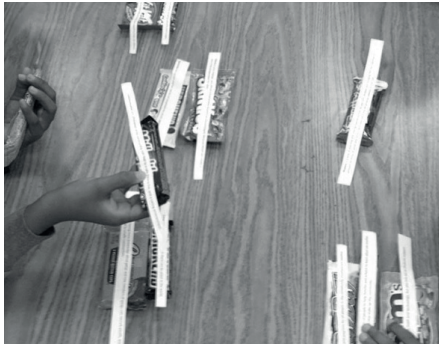
Pieces of paper with themes and narrative-based descriptions were taped onto candy bars and laid out on a table in front of the youth.

Figure 2. Concept-Mapping Activity

The youth took turns reading each theme and its description out loud and engaged in dialogical conversations with one another, describing why and how each theme was interconnected to others

Figure 3. Concept Map
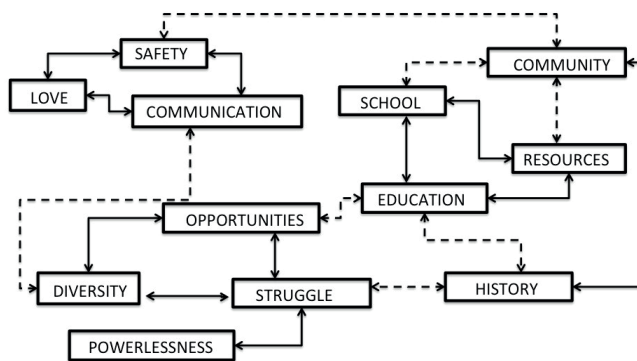
Solid lines represent direct connections, whereas dashed lines are intersectional connections.

Appendix A Concept-Map Activity

A Concept-Map allows one to see visually how different terms or concepts can be connected to each other. It is similar to a "brainstorm" or a "mind map" that generates and produces different ideas. For example, think of the word "community." Next, think of how "community" is related to other words or how it connects with other themes from the list below. Then, once you have discussed in your groups how "community" can be tied to other words or themes, cluster it. Use the template below to help you guide your thinking.

Themes:

1. *Diversity* of culture, language, race, ethnicity and generations deserve to be acknowledged, because these can create a sense of pride and appreciation for others.

2. *Safety* can be possible by having more knowledge about gangs and how members of gangs can recruit youth, and how violence and crime can lead to unsafe communities.

3. *Resources* such as money, more jobs, and programs for all people in the community involved are needed.

4. *Education* is what we learn in our classrooms about science, math and technology, but also how we as students support and help each other learn.

5. *History* is a way of learning and sharing experiences from the past with the present, and bringing the two together to present a story of what was once a farm town, and is now the growing community of Maplewood.

6. *Love* can give others hope that there can be peace in the world.

7. *Opportunities* that are just and fair, and do not perpetuate the racism, ageism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism.

8. *Powerlessness* can lead to helplessness and sadness, as well as poverty and hunger.

9. *Community* is the joining and coming together of people to help families and schools to learn about one another, especially to learn about the different cultures that make up the community.

10. *Struggle* is the fighting for human rights, to be treated equally and have the same opportunities as others.

11. *Communication* with different members of the community can lead to a safe place to live, and a caring environment.

12. *Schools* are lacking resources, some of which include Spanish-English bilingual teachers, nutritious, health and quality lunch food, and more education programs for youth.